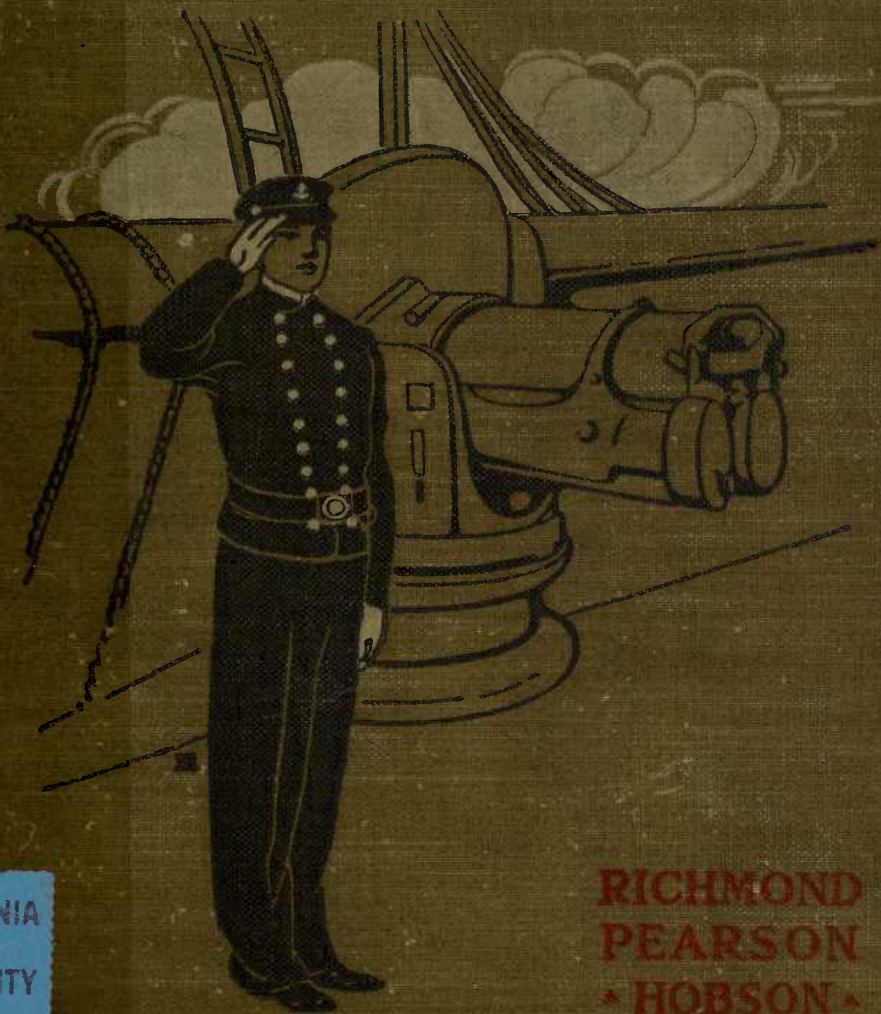


BUCK JONES AT ANNAPOLIS



RICHMOND
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BUCK JONES *at* ANNAPOLIS

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“And lashed the Stars and Stripes to the fore lift.”

[Page 266]

BUCK JONES *at* ANNAPOLIS

By

RICHMOND PEARSON HOBSON

AUTHOR OF

"THE SINKING OF THE MERRIMAC"



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BUCK JONES AT ANNAPOLIS

CHAPTER I

BUCK DECIDES ON ANNAPOLIS

MAJOR ROBIN JONES and Colonel Picket, his neighbor, were sitting in the gallery of the old Jones homestead in Sumter, Ala. "Wildwood" was one of the few Southern homes that had escaped the ravages of the Civil War. The old mansion, with its white columns, stood majestic in a vast grove of magnolia trees, and, from its elevation, dominated the surrounding country. The soft sunlight of the late afternoon filtered through the trees, and the June air was heavy with the perfume of Cherokee roses. The stillness of the closing day brought up the spirit of the past. The two ex-soldiers had been talking of antebellum events, and had quite naturally drifted into the days when they fought together under Jackson and Lee. As boys they had seen the troops returning from the war with Mexico. Love of country burned deep in their souls, only the deeper because a chivalric sense of duty had compelled them to take up arms for their native State.

"I am bringing up my boys," said Major Jones, "to love their country above all else, and I can see patriotism budding in Hugh and even in little Buck."

At that moment a boy of nine years appeared down at the big gate pulling along a reluctant goat.

"It is incredible," laughed Major Jones; "Buck has caught the goat at last."

At the big gate the goat made a final desperate stand, but the boy, wrapping the rope around his body, got hold of a sapling and slowly wound the rope up, dragging the goat in bodily. Once inside the gate, the goat gave up the struggle.

"Bring your goat here, Buck, and let us see him," called out his father.

The boy came up with a smile of triumph.

"It has taken me seven weeks to catch him, and I have had to drag him every foot of the way home."

With beaming countenance the boy took his captive out to the lot.

"He has a right to be proud," said his father. "He asked for the goat last spring. I told him he could have it, but that there would be no way of catching it till the flock was rounded up in the fall. I wondered how anybody on earth could hope to catch the goat running wild in five thousand acres of timber land. My wife asked me to put a stop to such a fruitless waste of time, but I would not interfere. I knew that in some way he would catch the goat in the end."

Colonel Picket laughed, and the two men then resumed their conversation about the war as Buck came back from the lot with his oldest brother Hugh, the boys sitting down on the steps.

"Yes," said Major Jones, "it was most unfortunate for the South to secede. My father was bitterly opposed to secession."

"So was my father," said the colonel.

"Yet, when the State seceded," resumed the major, "we all went with it. At that time we naturally felt it a sacred duty to put the State first, but I am proud to con-

fess that to-day I would regard it a sacred duty to put the country first. But there can never again be a question of secession. The supreme benefit of that terrific struggle was that it put this idea forever at rest. Every day I thank Heaven that the war ended as it did, and that I can bring up my children under the old flag, that stands for everything that is highest and best in the world. There will always be a strain of sadness through my life, however, that I once had to fight against that flag. I hope one of my sons may go to West Point and one of them to Annapolis, and give their whole time to its service."

"I will go to West Point," broke in Hugh quickly. "General Lee went there and Jackson and Grant, and Washington founded it."

Buck was all attention and seemed troubled when Hugh said this, but he said nothing himself, and ere long the group broke up.

After going to bed that night Buck wrestled with himself. Should he contest with Hugh for West Point? He longed to go where Lee and Washington had been. But Hugh was the older. It was right for him to have the choice, and he had chosen West Point. "Then it is my duty to go to Annapolis," he said aloud. "I will go." His mind was made up and he fell asleep content, remembering Admiral Buchanan, for whom he was named, and John Paul, who had taken the name of one of his own Jones ancestors. After all, he concluded, a man can be great and render his country noble service in the navy as well as in the army.

CHAPTER II

BUCK'S BOYHOOD TRIALS

SUMTER is a typical old Southern town of about three thousand inhabitants, very much the same as it was before the war, a college town, of unusual culture, located on the edge of the "Canebreak," a stretch of rich black land wonderfully fertile for cotton. The wealthy planters with plantations in the Canebreak make their homes in Sumter, and the people of the town are like one big family. Many had left Sumter to go to other cities with a wider business horizon, particularly the young men, but no one had ever thought of starting a cotton mill or other industry in Sumter itself. The old families that had produced great statesmen, jurists, generals, were rearing a new brood amid less wealth but under the same old traditions.

The young Joneses, in time, came to be noted in all the country around. They stood at the head of their classes in school and in Sunday school, they were the heroes in athletic sports, were the greatest in hunting and fishing and swimming. Some even said they ran wild. Buck, in particular, was developing so steadily that in many ways he was rapidly catching up with his older brother, and while he would lead the boys near his own age, he soon came to contend with those of his brother's age. For three years he had contended in wrestling, with the "Indian hug," to throw his brother, himself the best

wrestler of his age in town. His fourteenth birthday came, but his brother could still down him.

Not many months after the opening of this story Buck passed through an ordeal that made a lasting impression on his character. He was out hunting on horseback, expecting to go as far as the river swamp. He had the gun his father had given him for a birthday present, prized above all his possessions, and he took his setter dog Hugo, a beautiful animal just grown, a cross between a Gordon and a Llewelyn. Buck had chosen the pup from a litter while their eyes were still closed. He had brought the pup up on a bottle, had watched its growth with the concern and pride that a mother has in her offspring. He hopped with delight when the pup first "pointed" at an insect. He watched it with eagerness as it "set" the little chicks in the back yard. He was joyous when it set a sparrow and a field lark, and his joy knew no bounds when, only half grown, it set a "single bird" after a covey of quail had been scattered. Buck boasted of this performance for weeks afterwards.

The dog and boy were inseparable. They were together the last thing at night, and as soon as the doors were opened in the morning, Hugo would run up to Buck's room and jump on the bed for joy. A wonderful understanding existed between the two. If Buck were going to the depot, where Hugo might be in danger, he would simply say, "Go back. You can't come this time." And Hugo would stop and never murmur. Hugo always went as far as the big gate with Buck, and would run out to meet him when he came back. It was beautiful and touching to see the affection between the two. This affection was the greatest thing that had yet entered the boy's heart. Hugo was fast becoming the best bird dog in the country.

By noon, on this hunt, Buck had already bagged fif-

teen quail, five snipe, and two woodcock. The horse flushed a covey of quail that flew into the thicket. Buck got down and threw the reins over the horse's head and set out for the thicket, calling Hugo, whom he had seen a moment before ranging in the other direction. The broom sage was nearly waist high as Buck advanced. A rabbit jumped up and darted into a pile of brush. Buck never fired at rabbits in front of Hugo, as this is bad for bird dogs. But he said to himself, "As this fellow comes out of the brush I will get him before Hugo comes up." The broom sage rustled on the other side of the brush. "There he goes," Buck said to himself as he fired. The dog leaped into the air. "O Hugo!" Buck cried, and his heart stopped beating. A terrible fear seized him. He stood riveted, paralyzed. The dog dragged slowly up, with a gaping wound in its shoulder, but never uttered a cry. Its liquid brown eyes looked up at Buck, standing motionless, without any reproach, only with affection, as much as to say: "Don't be sad; I know you did not mean to do it."

As Buck's senses gradually returned, he knew the wound was terrible. He stooped down to look at it. The blood was pouring out. He tried to stop the flow. In vain. He took off his coat, cut the lining into bandages, and tied the wound. In vain. He then cut his shirt up and applied the bands. In vain. The blood still flowed. He reached out. The gun was in the way. His primitive passions rose. He threw the beautiful gun crashing through the thicket. Then he took Hugo up tenderly in his arms and mounted his horse, and started toward the road at a gallop.

"Hugo, my Hugo! Does it hurt you?" And he lifted the bleeding dog across his breast, and stroked its head. "Go, Prince!" he said as they struck the road, and he gave the horse full rein.

The thoroughbred went like lightning. Buck had dropped the reins on the horse's neck, as he used both hands to protect the dog from jar. As a child he had been taught to pray to Heaven for what he longed for. He had prayed continually to Heaven to help him catch his goat, and he had caught it. Before that he had prayed that his pigeons might come out from under the house without being eaten up by the cat, and they came out safe. Not long since he had prayed for success in the great sophomore oratorical contest, and he had won. "Oh, if God will only spare me Hugo!" he now cried.

They went at a dead run. As they passed the forks of the road the people in the country store looked out. Buck was bareheaded and in his undershirt. Boy, dog, horse were drenched in blood. The horse was foaming and laboring, but Buck urged him on at every leap. Buck thought it was hours, but in fact four miles were covered in less than fifteen minutes. Prince could not maintain such a gait. In spite of his royal spirit his pace began to slacken. Hugo was rapidly sinking. Buck sobbed, and dug his spurs into the horse's sides. Prince bounded forward only to slacken again. One mile more. Again the spurs. Another bound, a quicker relaxation. The animal began to stumble. They passed the outer houses. People rushed out. Buck did not see them. A hundred yards from the doctor's house the horse stumbled and fell. Buck went down, but held Hugo up to break the shock, and in an instant dashed afoot down the road into the doctor's house carrying a trail of blood. The doctor shook his head.

"Buck," said he, "nothing can be done."

The boy held the dog on his breast as the last life drops ebbed away. When the dog was dead, the world seemed black, the universe empty. Buck for the first time doubted

if there were a God in Heaven. He brought the body home and buried it in the garden under the big apple tree at the head of his watermelon patch.

Everybody sympathized with Buck in his grief. They knew he had loved his many pets in turn, but they knew he had never loved anything as he loved Hugo. Aunt Becky, the cook, prepared Buck's favorite dessert and had a tempting waiter in his room. All the members of the family did what they could. Buck appreciated everything, but no comfort came. He went to bed with the same stony look on his face. Everything became quiet. Buck felt alone in the cold universe. His door opened gently. His mother came in and sat on the side of the bed and kissed him. She had come in this way when he couldn't sleep from a blistered back, the result of staying out on the bank at Cove's Pond undressed in the sun. She had come in this way when he couldn't sleep from threatened croup.

Up to this point Buck had kept absolute self-control, but when his mother kissed him the depths opened up with a flood of tears, and he poured his heart out to his mother.

"It is not so much about poor Hugo," he sobbed, "but I have come to doubt God. One of the seniors has been telling me lately that there is no God, that religion is only superstition, that it is all nature and natural law. When I called out to God, there was no answer. If Hugo were back it would do no good."

He sobbed as though his heart would break. The boy had been suddenly thrown against the infinite, against the mystery of creation, the mystery of life, the mystery of death.

His mother kissed him again and lifted his head upon her shoulder and stroked his hair. "*There is a God I know*, and He is good and merciful, and if we do our part



"Boy, dog, horse were drenched in blood."

well, He will take care of us and all will be well in the end."

They remained in silence as Buck cried himself out.

"I can't tell, mamma, about God, but I *am* going to do *my* part."

This was the last struggle in which anyone was to help Buck. His boyhood closed here. The next day the papers of the sixth congressional district of Alabama announced that on April 15th a competitive examination would be held at Tuscarora for the appointment to Annapolis. Buck tried and won.

CHAPTER III

BUCK STARTS ON HIS JOURNEY TO ANNAPOLIS

BUCK had no great difficulty in winning the competitive examination, though there were competitors from all parts of the district, and he was the youngest of all. It came out that several of the boys had learned from private sources of the coming examination many months in advance, while Buck's first knowledge came from the newspapers, and he had but six weeks for preparation. When he saw the notice he said nothing, but began in his characteristic way to get ready. He wrote to the Superintendent of Education at Tuscarora, who was to be in charge, to get particulars about the examination, and to the Superintendent of the Naval Academy for a catalogue and particulars about the requirements of the entrance examination. He stopped college, gave up athletic sports, put aside everything, mapped the day out to get in a maximum of time, stopping only long enough for a trot of two miles about twilight to keep in trim. Buck's method and system more than made up for the shortness of the time.

No one knew except Major Jones that Buck's decision had been made fully, irrevocably, five years before. Major Jones had made his remarks on that day to Colonel Picket, but they were meant for the boys, and he had noticed the look on Buck's face. Hugh, who spoke out so quickly, had forgotten that he ever thought of West Point, and

the major's hope about a son going to the army was to be fulfilled by Houston, a younger son; but Buck, who said nothing, had quietly thought the matter out, decided for Annapolis, and had kept his decision always in mind.

Two things struck Mrs. Jones during Buck's preparation. One was his rigid punctuality at Sunday school and church. Pressed as he was for time, utilizing every available minute, he never opened a text book on Sunday, and every night read a chapter in the Bible, and said his prayers more carefully than formerly. His mother suspected that he was still troubled and was trying to do "his part."

The other thing was Buck's challenge to Hugh to wrestle every morning before breakfast. Mrs. Jones did not know that years before Buck had resolved to throw Hugh some day. The week before leaving, Buck threw him. The wrestling ceased. Buck was just like other boys in most respects, but in two things he was different. He *had* to be first and he *had* to carry out his resolves.

When the Congressman gave Buck the preliminary appointment following the result of the examination, he directed him to report to the Navy Department and receive the formal appointment, and then to report to the Superintendent of the Naval Academy before May 12th, when entrance examinations were to begin. This allowed but very little time for preparation, and Buck continued the same rigid routine of study for the entrance examinations. One night at supper Buck remarked that the earth is very much more of a water world than he had hitherto appreciated. He had been poring over a globe and over physical geography. Everything that pertained to the sea came to have a new interest for Buck. A few days later he remarked that the United States has the sea all around it except on one side.

"That is very true," added Major Jones. "The United States is essentially the ocean's country. You will find, my boy, that naval operations have played a far more important part in the life and history of America than people realize. You see," he continued, "at the close of wars the disbanding soldiers go to all parts of the land, telling everybody about the work of the armies and the deeds of the soldiers, but no one goes out to tell of the work of the navy and the deeds of the sailors."

This impressed Buck very much.

"You see, my boy," his father continued, "man is by nature a land animal. He naturally forgets the sea. Not only have historians neglected to appreciate the maritime affairs of the world, but writers have ignored the wonderful achievements of men on the sea. I could tell you about deeds along our rivers and coast and abroad on the high seas during the Civil War that eclipse for gallantry and daring all the deeds of the armies. The attempts at submarine navigation were beyond question the most gallant deeds of all the ages. America's whole naval history is like a romance."

Buck was electrified. He had felt sad at first at giving up West Point. He was now all delight and elation. A whole new world full of wonderful possibilities lay ahead. He was all eagerness to go forward.

"I did *my* part, *my* duty, in accepting Annapolis," he mused, "and now I wouldn't change it for anything in the world. Mother is right. If we do our part it will all turn out for the best in the end."

Buck left Sumter on the first day of May so as to have about a week of final preparation after reaching Annapolis. He had to change cars at Selma, at Montgomery, at Atlanta, at Danville, besides stopping at Washington to report to the Secretary of the Navy. He had never been

more than forty miles from Sumter. Tuscarora, of five thousand inhabitants, was the largest city he had ever seen.

"It is a formidable trip for the boy to make alone," said Colonel Picket to Major Jones, as they went down together to the depot.

"Yes, when we remember that traveling is a new thing for him, but I have no uneasiness. Buck will take care of himself. He is always courteous and considerate to others, and anybody he meets will be glad to direct him."

Buck's mother and father, his three sisters and three brothers were at the depot, and the neighbors and boys from the college. Buck's fraternity was there to a man.

"We don't know what it is like up there, Buck," said one of them, "but we know you will show them a few things before you are done."

By common consent everybody was bright and cheery in saying good-by. They knew what a tender, affectionate heart Buck had in his breast. Mrs. Jones, though the chords of her mother's heart were drawn tight, preserved a cheerful smile. Buck turned away quickly. He felt strange twinges about his own heart and a contraction in his throat.

A moment later he stood on the rear platform waving gayly to them all, and they waved their handkerchiefs gayly to him, till the train passed round the curve into the cut. Then they needed their handkerchiefs for other purposes. Mrs. Jones was the only one in the group whose eyes were not wet.

"God will take care of my boy," she said, and her heart found rest and strength.

A passenger on the West Point route going from Montgomery to Atlanta next day became much interested in the

bright boy in the seat in front, who was looking at everything that passed the window.

"You seem to enjoy crossing trestles," he remarked.

"Yes, sir. I am very much interested in trestles. I saw a wonderful trestle yesterday coming out of Selma, across the Alabama River."

Just then the train rattled across a trestle.

"This is the fifty-ninth," he remarked.

The stranger looked around.

"Are you counting the trestles?"

"Yes, sir. I always count trestles. There are eleven between Sumter and Tuscarora. You ought to see Tuscarora if you have never been there. But I have crossed more trestles since yesterday than I ever crossed in my life put together."

"Where are you going?"

"To Washington."

"Do you expect to count all the trestles to Washington?"

"Yes, sir."

The stranger was delighted with the boy's frankness, and went on.

"But how did you count trestles last night when you were asleep?"

"I didn't go to sleep on the train. I didn't want to miss anything."

"Where did you go to sleep?"

"In Montgomery."

"At the Exchange Hotel?"

"Oh, no, I have never been in a hotel. I waited in the depot."

"And could you sleep in the depot?"

"Oh, yes, sir. I used my carpetbag for a pillow."

It was now about one o'clock, and the boy took down

a large bag from the rack. It was made of carpet stuff carefully sewed together, with handles and a strap after the fashion of the bags used by the adventurers that came to the South in reconstruction days to be elected to office by the newly emancipated negroes.

"My father wanted me to bring a valise," said the boy as he began to open the bag, "but I preferred my carpetbag because my mother made it for me a long time ago and I am used to it, as I take it when I go fishing and hunting."

The boy took out several pasteboard boxes with provisions carefully done up in tissue paper.

"My mother and sisters prepared these for me, and won't you join me for lunch?"

The stranger noticed the contents of the bag, and seeing a Bible, knew that the frank, generous, confiding country boy was clad with armor against the assaults of the world.

It was beyond midnight when the train passed Spartanburg. Buck had become terribly sleepy, and from time to time would drop off dozing until they crossed a trestle. One time he feared he had missed a large one. Finally he made a bargain with the brakeman, who agreed to count the trestles till daybreak for twenty-five cents. The same arrangement was made the next night, and when Buck reached Washington the following morning he had the number of trestles from Sumter, Ala.: two hundred and seventy-seven, as he wrote to Hugh in his first letter.

What Buck enjoyed most on his trip was passing places he had read about in history. At Charlotte he thought of the Declaration of Mecklenburg. One of his ancestors had taken part in this declaration. A passenger sent a thrill through the boy when he casually pointed out King's Mountain and Guilford Court House. Buck had ancestors

in both of those battles. A monument stands on the field of Guilford Court House to a heroine, an ancestress, of whom his mother had often spoken. His heart beat fast at Danville when he heard the train caller call out "All aboard for Richmond." He had six cousins and uncles who surrendered at Appomattox, the remainder of fifteen that had gone into the war. Again he was elated when the brakeman called out Manassas; but there was a tinge of sadness. His mother's favorite brother had been killed there. It was hard for him to contain himself when they passed Alexandria.

"Can you see the church that Washington used to attend?" he asked his car neighbor.

"No, it is a little distance on the other side of town."

"Is this the Potomac we are crossing?" he almost shouted.

"Yes," answered his neighbor.

As they drew into Washington Buck's eye was riveted on the wonderful shaft that pierced the blue.

"What is that?" he asked.

"It is Washington's Monument."

"I am so glad," he said softly. "It is so tall and majestic and straight. It is just like him."

The stranger must have seen that the boy was full of ideals, for he said, "Do you see that house with the columns beyond the river, high up on the bank?"

"Yes," said Buck, "it looks like my home."

"That is Arlington. It was the home of General Lee."

Buck's heart almost stopped beating. His two ideals stood before him, looking at each other across the Potomac.

The baggage man at the Union Depot smiled when a boy came up, politely said "Good morning," and asked

for a check for his bag and inquired how to reach the Navy Department.

"Go up to the corner there and turn to your left, and take the Pennsylvania Avenue street car for about a mile. Anyone will then show you the State, War, and Navy Building."

Buck bowed, and thanked the man and set out. As he turned the corner a well-dressed man was coming down Pennsylvania Avenue. "Good morning," said Buck, with an open, hearty smile. The man looked surprised, but finally returned a half-hearted "Good morning!"

"He is not very polite," thought Buck. "Everywhere around Sumter everybody says 'Good morning.'"

Buck had always said "Good morning" to everybody, whether acquainted or not. The stranger stopped a little farther on to look back at the boy and watch him as he passed a man walking rapidly.

"Good morning," the boy promptly said.

The man looked up, surprised, then passed on without any sign of acknowledgment. It was evident that Buck felt affronted. He drew himself up. To the next man he was not so forward in his salutation. He caught the man's eye, and was about to speak, but the man made no movement of recognition.

Buck threw his head back. "They don't wish to speak to me," he said to himself.

Buck decided to walk instead of taking the car. "I will follow the car track," thought he. "The sun is out. The avenue runs a little to the west of north. I can find it again from its leading to the Capitol and can retrace my steps without trouble," and he began to note objects to guide him back, as though he were in the river swamp.

He was sorry he had to go away from instead of toward the Capitol. He would stop and turn around to look at

it every now and then. That great structure fascinated him from the start, like the great monument.

"That," he pondered, "is the seat of government of this great country. It looks like it." At one point in the avenue he was delighted to find that he could see the Capitol and the monument at the same time. He passed the Treasury Building and admired it, but did not know what building it was. And then he passed the White House.

"That's a nice place," he thought. "I like it, but it hasn't got a gallery like 'Wildwood,' and the columns are not as big, and the yard is so small. There is no place for a tournament. You couldn't let the horses and cows in to graze, and I doubt whether you could keep pigs and goats at all. It is a pity they haven't got some of our big red oaks and magnolias." Buck didn't think he could ever be satisfied in a place that didn't have these. "And I don't see a single chestnut tree and not even a hickory nor a scalybark."

Buck was about to pass on, concluding that, everything considered, the place was unsatisfactory, when through a vista he saw the monument.

"Oh, they can see the monument from there."

All objections were wiped away in an instant.

"I would like to live there," he said, "in one of the back rooms where I could see the monument all the time: see it in the early sunlight and in the setting sun and in the moonlight. I wish I knew who lived there."

He wanted to ask some one very much, but after being affronted he had made up his mind not to speak to a soul; but across the street he saw a negro. It brought up home feelings. He crossed and said:

"Uncle, will you tell me who lives there?"

"I ain't no uncle of yours. When I want to claim kin wid you I'll let you know."

This was beyond Buck's very imagination.

"You impudent rascal, you, do you know whom you are talking to?"

Buck had always gotten on well with negroes. He loved them and they loved him.

"Scuse me, boss, I didn't mean nothin'. I thought you was tryin' to guy me. Why, the President lives there, sah. Dat's de White House."

"One of my ancestors must have lived there, then," said Buck to himself as he took a closer look at the place. "The President of the United States lives here," he mused. "He must be a great and good man."

"Uncle," said Buck, with kindness and sympathy in his voice, "I hope boys don't guy you up here. Could you show me the way to the Navy Department?"

"It's jes 'cross de street, sah, in dat big buildin', on dis side of de buildin'."

Sure enough, there were two big anchors, one on each side of the entrance. Buck went in and was lost in delight at seeing models of ships from the old *Constitution* down to those of the present.

"Are these like the real ships?" he asked the attendant.

"Exactly alike to the last bolt and the last rope."

"How wonderful," Buck thought. He could hardly tear himself away to find the office of the Secretary on the second floor.

"This way," said the doorkeeper, as he ushered Buck into the large reception room.

Buck thought this was the Secretary's office, and looked around to see which of the occupants was the Secretary. He was undecided. Probably that big man over there at the desk with such a fierce, serious look. As he stood in doubt the usher asked him to be seated, and he sat down

alongside of a number who were evidently waiting to see the Secretary. Next to him was a middle-aged lady, who reminded him of his mother. She seemed to be in trouble.

Messengers were coming and going. Men with papers and documents passed in and out. Buck watched everything with keen interest.

"The Navy Department must be very complicated," he thought.

After a while a man came quietly out of the side door and began to speak in turn to each of those who were waiting. When he reached the lady next to him Buck heard her tell what a fine boy her son was, how bright, how ambitious, how it was her dream and had been the dream of her dead husband to have their only son go into the navy.

"I am in full sympathy with you, Mrs. Preble. We want the name in the navy; but you know how rigidly the rules have to be observed to preserve high standards. The Secretary of the Navy must sustain the Academic Board or chaos would reign. If you can prevail upon the Academic Board to recommend that your son be turned back to the class now entering instead of being dropped, I will approve their action."

"I will go to Annapolis to-day," she said, and left hurriedly.

Buck's turn came next.

"Good morning," the gentleman said, and extended his hand in a most kindly manner.

"Good morning, sir," said Buck. "I have instructions to report to the Secretary of the Navy and hand him this, to be exchanged for a formal appointment." And he handed the document he had brought in his inside coat pocket.

The gentleman called to the big man over at the desk and said, "Get the document ready."

"Why," said Buck to himself, "this is the Secretary of the Navy himself, and the big, fierce-looking man is only a clerk."

"You have come a long way. Did you come alone?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Aren't you late in going on? Most of the candidates have gone long ago to get coaching at the preparatory schools."

"Yes, sir, I know I am late. My father suggested that I go on to one of the schools that had written, but I really thought it best to continue studying at home as I had been doing for the competitive examination. I had the catalogue and requirements. Of course it was impossible in so short a time to prepare thoroughly in everything, but I felt that I could cover the chief parts in time."

"Do you expect to pass?"

"I hope so, sir."

"I wish you success," and the Secretary went back to his office. "Such a contrast in bringing up boys," he thought. "How self-reliant this fellow is, while young Preble can't do a thing without his mother."

Soon the clerk brought the appointment, and Buck went out thinking what a fine man the Secretary was.

"That is just the way a great man would do. How silly of me to think he would be big and fierce. The Secretary is the finest man I ever saw," Buck said to himself, "except my father and my uncles."

Buck retraced his steps to the station, got his bag, and caught the afternoon train for Annapolis.

CHAPTER IV

BUCK CONTINUES HIS JOURNEY AND ARRIVES AT ANNAPOLIS

AS his train pulled out from Washington, Buck watched the Capitol dome as long as it could be seen. The Washington Monument was cut off from view from the start. Soon he became absorbed in watching the country out of the window and in again counting the trestles. He was in a kind of reverie when the brakeman called, "Change for Annapolis." He was so startled that he came near forgetting his bag as he left the train. A number of passengers got off at the same time. Just behind him he noticed Mrs. Preble.

"May I help you?" he asked, as he touched his hat and gallantly offered his hand.

Mrs. Preble accepted his assistance, though she thought to herself, "I wonder where the boy's mother is. He seems all alone."

Several ladies followed and Buck lent them all his hand. He noticed that the young ladies smiled as they thanked him, and a stout Irish woman said, "Faith and you are a koind and polite little man." Buck's heart warmed up at their signs of appreciation for he was heart hungry. Since leaving home his heart had been on short rations, and since the cold treatment in Washington he had begun to feel very lonely, and the world began to look empty again as it had after Hugo's death. The malady of homesickness had taken up its abode in his heart.

Feeling left out as the passengers talked in groups, Buck wandered off beyond the platform and examined the surrounding country. His eye, being that of a young woodsman, discovered the indication of a creek off at a distance. When the porter told him the Annapolis train was at least thirty minutes late, he put his bag on a truck and went out for discovery. It was not long, however, before he was once more seated in the train, covering the last miles of his journey to Annapolis.

Buck watched out of the windows on both sides, his interest growing keener and keener the nearer they drew to their destination. The rolling country was much like the country north of Sumter, but Buck noted several new kinds of trees and two or three new kinds of birds, and he realized that he was far away from home. Nevertheless, when he saw the oaks and the pines he felt that there were friends in this new country.

At many stops at crossroad stations Buck saw old homes of colonial architecture run down, out of repairs, reminding him of places at home.

Buck had been seated on the right side of the train in the rear seat. He crossed over to the left side, for he heard Mrs. Preble tell the young lady in the seat with her that the Naval Academy grounds could be seen off at a distance on that side.

"There is the clock tower over the New Quarters, and you can see the flag flying from the flagpole beyond."

Buck saw them distinctly. He drew a deep breath. "That is the flag I am going to serve under," and the springs of a deep ingrained patriotism welled up.

"What is that great white cross on the mound pedestal that you can see through the trees?" asked the girl.

"That is in the government cemetery. It is the monument to those lost on the Jeanette Arctic Expedition.

There are many other interesting tombs and monuments there."

Buck saw the cross as it disappeared behind the trees. Instantly it had a gloomy fascination for him. "I will go out there soon," he said to himself as the train stopped.

There was a crowd outside. Buck saw several young men in uniforms. "They must be cadets," he said, as he rose, took his bag in hand, and brought up the rear as the passengers filed out. Somebody met each of the others in turn. Buck felt lonely as he stepped off in the midst of the gay throng, and no one met him. Mrs. Preble embraced her son with joy, and said she was sure she could get the Academic Board to recommend turning back instead of dropping.

"You have been such a good boy," she said. "They will be glad to do it now that they know that the Secretary is willing."

"Mother, you can do anything, but," the boy added, "I am afraid it has been very hard for you."

Buck heard the conversation and took a liking to young Preble from the start. He could not keep his eyes off the cadets, straight, dignified, immaculate in their full-dress uniforms. He eyed each one carefully. They were absorbed with the young ladies they had come to meet.

"When did you leave New York?" he heard one of them ask.

"This morning at ten," answered the young lady.

"Such a pity you could not get here yesterday to rest up, and then we had a great game of baseball this afternoon. We beat Johns Hopkins. But I am so glad you came. It is the last Saturday-night hop of the year."

Buck could not help hearing these things. "Young ladies come all the way from New York to the dances," he thought. "They must have a crack baseball nine. I won-

der if they have any catchers who catch under the bat?" Buck and Hugh were catchers at college, the only two who ever dared catch under the bat. At that time masks and plastrons and padded gloves had not reached Sumter. Buck had visions of showing the nine what advantage it was to catch under the bat.

One by one the couples left. The rear cadet, who saw Buck looking, caught his eye, and lowered his brows with a terrible frown and a look that was calculated to strike terror in a plebe or a candidate. Buck never winced. The cadet passed on.

"Why doesn't he take the lady's cloak and umbrella?" murmured Buck. "He isn't thoughtful with ladies. I hate him."

The passengers all took hacks and drove away. Buck was left by himself, when a full-grown mulatto came up and asked if he was a candidate and wished a boarding house.

"Yes," said Buck.

"I am Patrick Henry," said the darky, "and I look out for Mrs. Connell's boarding house. I will look out for your trunk and black your shoes every morning."

Buck helped him find the trunk.

"Do you know the name of the last cadet that left?"

"That was Mr. Kerr. They call him 'Jo-Jo.' He's the terror of the plebes and candidates, the worst hazer in the Academy."

"Do you know the name of the first cadet that left?"

"That was Dwight Tyler, the four-striper, the saviest man that has been in the Academy for twenty years. I waited on Mr. Tyler when he was a candidate," said Patrick Henry with pride and with insinuating assurance. "I have waited on nearly all the four-stripers and savey men."

Patrick Henry wished to put Buck in a hack.

"No, I prefer to walk," said Buck, as he gazed at the curious old hacks. Buck noticed the resemblance between these hacks and the old one in the back of the livery stable at Sumter that had been used before the war, and which was preserved because of its association, four governors and two generals having ridden in it. Patrick Henry, as he directed Buck how to find Mrs. Connell's, argued to himself that it was time for new hacks when gentlemen were actually afraid to ride in the old ones.

Buck walked down the street paved with cobblestones. He looked at everything.

"Many of the houses resemble the hacks," he thought, "but I like them." When he reached St. Anne's Circle he was delighted. The old church all covered with ivy, surrounded by a circle with trees and grass and a few tombs on one side, especially appealed to him. A little farther on he turned to the left and found Mrs. Connell's, and was soon located in a room upstairs looking out over the old church.

When the door closed he felt very lonely. He had never stayed in a strange room before. Homesickness began to come over him again, but work was Buck's great recourse when his mind was troubled.

"I will begin studying to-night," he said.

Just before supper formation in the Academy a group of third classmen were gathered on the seats flanked by old brass cannon in front of New Quarters. Jo-Jo Kerr was talking.

"I have never seen such a crop of gally candidates in my life. The worst one of all came in to-day. He tried to stare me out of countenance at the station. Such brazen gall!"

"He *must* have had gall," remarked Whaley, Whaley

was himself a great hazer and had a terrible look, but he knew he could not equal Jo-Jo.

Across the walk in the other gun-flanked seats some first classmen were seated. Kerr called out:

"Tyler, did you see that gally candidate at the station?"

Kerr thought he gained importance by speaking to Tyler, who was in the first class. He was himself in the third.

"Which one do you mean?"

"The one with the carpetbag."

"I saw the boy with the carpetbag. He is very young and is probably green."

"I will take the gall out of him, the carpetbagger," said Jo-Jo, "and I will put the plebes on to him as soon as they become third classmen, and they will get a good chance at him on the cruise."

"I will look out for him, too," said Whaley. "He probably thinks he is the biggest man in the world."

Whaley honestly believed that hazing was the best-known process for inculcating discipline, and felt especially called on to "look out" for the gally plebes. The belief was so ingrained in him that he could not break it even after he reached the dignity of a second classman. To be more efficient, he took special lessons in boxing, and had become the best boxer in the Academy so he could accommodate a plebe that wanted to fight. But Jo-Jo Kerr was innately vicious, and exhausted the domain of hazing for the gratification of his bullying instinct. He thought it gave him prestige—as it did with a certain clique.

When the group of third classmen broke up as the bugle blew, they had laid their schemes for the gally carpetbagger. As Tyler stepped out to take command of the battalion he thought to himself: "Jo-Jo is a bully and a coward."

He wants to fight that green country boy, thirty pounds his inferior, who probably knows nothing about boxing."

By the time the Connells' supper bell rang Buck had unpacked his books and was ready to begin studying. When he entered the dining room Mrs. Connell introduced him to her boarders, six or seven of whom were candidates. Several had their fathers with them, two had their mothers. Buck was seated next to Preble, whose mother had already told him of the little boy with the carpetbag. Preble liked Buck as Buck liked Preble from the beginning. As they warmed up, Buck asked Preble what was the meaning of the word *savey*. People all around the table suppressed a smile.

"*Savey* comes from the French verb *savoir*, to know, and means smart and talented. For instance, Tyler, the four-striper, who stands first in everything and has stood first in everything for four years, is a *savey* man. The opposite of *savey* is wooden. For instance, I have been standing last in almost everything. I am wooden."

Buck flushed up to the roots of his hair.

"Pardon me," he said earnestly, "I did not know. I am so sorry."

"Don't worry, Mr. Jones. Here at Annapolis when a man is wooden he knows it and everybody else knows it. Before I came here I thought I knew something and had some ability. Now I realize that I was very much mistaken."

"You are not just to yourself, Mr. Preble," said a candidate sitting opposite. "Your resignation has not yet been accepted. You cannot be called a 'bilger.'"

Buck wondered what a "bilger" was, but he would not risk making another break by asking. The candidate that spoke was named Catell. He had come to like Preble. Everybody liked Preble.

Later in the meal when Buck's assurance returned, he asked Preble if he knew a cadet named Jo-Jo. The table again smiled. What plebe or candidate didn't know Jo-Jo, at least by reputation!

"He is the meanest man that ever lived," said Mrs. Preble. "He has been like a nightmare to my boy all the year."

"Mother, please don't call me 'boy,'" pleaded Preble. "A cadet is supposed to be a man. The servants are called 'boys.'"

"Is Jo-Jo cross-eyed?" asked Buck innocently.

The table roared.

"No," said Preble, "he is not really cross-eyed or he couldn't have passed the physical examination; but when he looks at a plebe and frowns he certainly does look cross-eyed. I have never seen such a look on a human being. This is what gives him the name of 'Jo-Jo.'"

"Now to change the subject, and reverting to the derivation of the word 'savey,'" said Pikeman, a candidate at the other side of the table, "I would take issue with you, Mr. Preble. The word must surely be derived from the Latin. I am convinced of this, having graduated in Latin at the Classical College of Pennsylvania."

Buck had read Cæsar and Virgil and was in Cicero, though nearly four years younger than Pikeman, but he refrained from referring to his Latin. However, he could not help saying a word on Preble's side, for he saw that Pikeman's remarks were intended to discredit Preble.

"Without any pretensions in Latin, it seems to me a question of common sense. They do not teach Latin at the Academy and never have taught it; but they do teach French and have always taught it. The word originated there, and the only reasonable inference is that it must have come from the French."

Buck was naturally reticent, but Major Jones had brought his boys up to discuss all kinds of important and learned questions at the table.

The other candidates looked over to Pikeman, who was coming to be regarded as a leader. Having no rejoinder about "savey," he took another tack.

"There can at least be no question about the word 'bilge.' It comes from bilge water, the water that slowly accumulates in the bottom or bilge of a ship. It is foul water and bad for the ship, so they pump it out. By analogy a cadet is pumped out or bilged and becomes a 'bilger.'"

The guests saw the flush on Preble's cheek. Pikeman knew he had triumphed over Preble, but he caught the defiant look in Buck's eye and realized the inherent antagonism of their two natures.

Alboard, a candidate steeped in the classics, who had claims of being a poet and a philosopher, spoke up and said: "It is greatly to be regretted that we do not go more to the Greek and the Sanskrit for our modern words."

Buck had studied Greek and read Xenophon and saw nothing alluring in that dead language. "Perhaps there is something in the Sanskrit," he concluded, as no one took Alboard up on his statement.

When supper was over Buck went up and made a little visit to Preble and his mother.

"I certainly trust you will succeed in your efforts," he said to Mrs. Preble as he left. To himself he muttered, as he took up his algebra, "Pikeman is mean. He had no consideration for Mrs. Preble, either. He is cruel and mean."

At 9.30 Buck heard a peal. "That must be a cannon," he thought, listening as it roared and echoed. Buck had never heard a cannon before. It stirred his blood.

CHAPTER V.

BUCK MAKES FRIENDS AND SOME EXAMINATIONS

THE next day Mrs. Connell noticed that Buck went over to St. Anne's to church while the other candidates studied for examinations. In the afternoon Alboard came in for a visit.

"What are you boning now? That's the biggest textbook I ever saw. A religious book! Who ever heard of anybody except a narrow-minded preacher studying a book like that? I don't bother my head about such things. You are a slave when you take up creeds and religions. For my part, I believe in nature and beauty and liberty."

At this juncture there was a rap on the door. Buck opened, and Preble stepped in with a cadet in full dress, tall, imposing. It was Moble, who was standing at the head of the plebe class.

"This is Mr. Jones, of whom I was telling you."

Buck, who was still standing, bowed and said:

"Won't you take seats, gentlemen? And that is Mr. Alboard."

Moble and Preble had roomed together, and were good friends. Preble was telling him about Buck, and Moble asked to see his friend, "the carpetbagger." Preble brought him over with the understanding that Moble would not "run" him. Buck noticed that Alboard jumped to his feet and stood attention with the palm of his hands to the front.

"Fins out, Mr. Jones," Moble commanded.

"I don't understand you, sir."

"Like Mr. Alboard."

Buck did not understand, but came to attention. Preble had told him to do everything cadets told him to do. It was the custom, and the only way to get on smoothly, and then they wouldn't haze him much, only "run" him.

"Mr. Alboard, I understand you are a poet. Recite 'Locksley Hall' for us."

Alboard began.

"Stop," said Moble; "put more expression in it. A poet ought to enter into the very spirit of the poem he recites."

And Alboard tried again. When he had finished, Moble asked:

"Where is your Latin scholar?"

"Mr. Pikeman, do you mean?"

"Yes, bring him in."

Alboard went off and soon returned with Pikeman.

"Fins out," and Pikeman stood at attention.

"I understand you are a finished Latin scholar, Mr. Pikeman."

"I think I am, sir. I graduated at the Classical College of Pennsylvania."

"Decline *hic* for us."

"*Hic, haec, hoc, hujus, hujus, hujus*," Pikeman went on well till he reached the Accusative and Vocative.

"What is that? A finished Latin scholar stumbling like that?"

"Oh, yes. I have it now—*hank*. It's *hank*."

"Now repeat that word so you won't forget it."

"*Hank, hank, hank*."

Buck began to smile.

"Wipe off that smile, Mr.——"

Buck wiped it off.

"Go on, Mr. Pikeman."

"*Hank, hank, hank, hank.*"

It was too much for Buck. He had to smile.

"Wipe it off, I tell you. Now put it in your pocket and look solemn, for we are hearing the pure Latin from a finished Latin scholar."

"*Hank, hank, hank.*"

From that day Pikeman was called "Hank."

Moble noticed the big book on Buck's table.

"A new text-book, eh! A religious book for one so young! Tell me the origin of the Nicene Creed."

Moble told the others to march out and leave the theologian to his meditations, and he went out himself.

It was a bad day for Buck. The day without the absorption of study had brought on an aggravation of his homesickness. Everybody at the supper table thought he looked very serious. Mrs. Connell saw him slip out and go to St. Anne's for evening service.

Before going to bed he wrote to his mother. She was not surprised to read: "I went to St. Anne's, a very old church, for service this morning and to-night. The Bishop of Maryland is coming next Sunday. I intend to join the church." Mrs. Jones read between the lines that he was troubled, though he never made any mention of it.

"Yes, he is nobly doing *his part*," she reflected. "God will take care of him," and she went on in peace, though she felt her bosom heaving.

Buck was up early and had put in an hour's work on geography by the time the other candidates assembled for breakfast. As they sat down Catell asked Buck if he had been well coached.

"No," replied Buck, "I haven't been coached at all."

"Then you had better come with us to the preparatory school this week."

Buck went with them to Professor Tompkins.

"Turkey Tompkins will give you a lot of useful points," they assured him.

Buck remained during the morning's instructions, which were a review and summing up of the rules for spelling.

At the dinner table Slinginbury remarked that Turkey Tompkins was great.

"I know nearly all his rules now, and they cover the whole language. Mr. Jones, if you just remember those rules, you are sure to pass."

"The only thing I remember," said Buck, "is that words beginning with pro, ex, and suc have eed, and all others ede, and I would probably spell one of these words without thinking about the rule. It is too late now for me to learn rules."

Buck felt that his morning had been wasted, and he determined not to go back to Turkey Tompkins any more, though he had enrolled for the week.

Slinginbury confided to Catell that he feared Jones would fail on spelling. "And he is a nice fellow. I like him. It would be too bad. I wish I could help him get the rules, but I fear nothing can be done for him, poor fellow. Such a pity he didn't come three or four months ago. By this time he would know all of Turkey Tompkins's rules."

"He hasn't failed yet," replied Catell laconically.

After dinner Buck went over to Preble's room. Mrs. Preble told him that she had seen five heads of departments thus far, and that all were willing to recommend that her son be turned back instead of bilged. "It looks very favorable. I shall see the remaining members of the Academic Board this afternoon. I fear some trouble from the Superintendent. He is a great disciplinarian and

scrupulously conscientious, and fears he might be influenced by his great admiration and love for my son's grandfather, with whom he sailed as a midshipman."

"By the way, Preble," said Buck, "don't I have to report to the Superintendent?"

"You certainly do, and you had better hurry up."

"I will go at once. Which is the way?"

"Wait a minute, and we will all go together."

They started out—Buck, Preble, and Mrs. Preble. They went down to King Edward Street, along St. John's College campus.

"This is one of the oldest colleges in America, and has a high standard. A fine lot of students they are, too, but they can never touch the cadets in football or in baseball. They have a good deal of feeling, and cheer for whatever team comes to play against us."

"That seems strange," said Buck, "to cheer against the home team."

"It is even stranger," continued Preble, "all the town people cheer against us, and even the mess-hall boys and yard employees."

"I can't understand it," said Buck.

They turned down Prince George Street.

"What quaint old names for the streets! Prince George, King George, and this morning on the way to Turkey Tompkins's we went down Duke of Gloucester Street. It sounds like colonial days."

They turned to the left into Maryland Avenue, and there ahead, square across the street, was the great gate in the high wall, the entrance to the Naval Academy. Buck examined every detail as they approached and passed through the smaller side gate.

Buck turned around to look at the sentry again, a member of the Marine Corps, the corps that had such a won-

derful record for efficiency and gallantry, and clothed him in his mind with a halo of glory.

As they arrived clear of the house on the left Buck stopped outright, recognizing the New Quarters.

At that moment the bugle sounded the call for section formation for the first afternoon period.

Cadets began to pour out and form on the walk in front.

"Jones, you had better not linger. They are all looking at you, and the plebes and even some of the third classmen are already laying for you. They call you the 'carpetbagger.' It all comes from Jo-Jo Kerr. They consider it gally to watch them at a formation or drill. Jo-Jo has already spread it that you are 'gally.'"

"I never said anything to Jo-Jo in my life."

"He says you were gally to him at the depot."

"I looked at him. That was all."

They turned to the right along Blake Row, but Buck could not help looking over his shoulder at the formation. It was a new and strange world to him where he was forbidden even to look at people.

"I will leave you here," said Mrs. Preble, as she turned and went up the steps of the handsome house on the right.

"Mother has gone in to see Billy Kendrick," Preble remarked. "He is the head of the Department of Mathematics. He lives there. Billy is a good man. He is awfully nice to the savey men, and frequently takes the first section himself; but he is hard on the wooden men. Things are so clear to him, he can't understand why they are not clear to others."

Buck began to look at the buildings with renewed interest.

"What a beautiful church!" he exclaimed.

"That is the chapel. They hold service there every Sunday morning, and everybody must go except a few who go out in town to other churches."

"That's a good thing," said Buck, "to have everybody go to church every Sunday. They don't even do that in Sumter, where the college is a church college. Naval officers must be unusually religious men," he added.

"They really are," said Preble. "My mother says so, though they are not so considered generally. After church there is Sunday school for the children in the yard, with a Bible class for cadets, and in the afternoon there is a meeting of the Y. M. C. A."

"This building ahead is the library and Superintendent's office. Go up the steps, and you will see the orderly outside. He will announce you. I will walk up and down Buchanan Row here till you come out."

"Buchanan Row, did you say?"

"Yes. It is named for Captain Buchanan, who was the first superintendent of the Naval Academy, and later joined the Confederate Navy and commanded the *Merimac*."

"I am named for him. My name is Buchanan. They call me Buck in Sumter."

From that time Preble called him Buck, and people began to call him Buck generally; and everybody came to know him as "Buck Jones."

He went up the steps with some trepidation. There was the orderly.

"Oh, he is a marine," exclaimed Buck to himself, and aloud: "I am Buchanan Polk Jones, a candidate, and have come to report to the Superintendent."

The orderly saluted, and passed in a door on the right.

"The Superintendent says to come in, sir," and the orderly held the door wide open.

Buck stepped in. His heart was pounding hard, though there was no visible sign of emotion when Captain Rumsey looked up, with his clear, calm gray eyes. Captain Rumsey with his gray mustache and gray hair and calm, dignified manner was his very ideal.

"I have come to report, sir," said Buck, handing out his letter of instruction from the Navy Department.

The Captain took the document, examined it briefly, and said quietly but very distinctly:

"Orderly, take this to the Secretary." And to Buck: "Mr. Jones, please go with the orderly. The Secretary will give you further instructions."

Buck went out feeling that his naval life had begun. He had been saluted by a marine, and had been spoken to as "Mr. Jones" by the Superintendent himself. When he stepped out on the high veranda, after getting his instructions about reporting for physical and mental examinations, Buck paused a moment and looked out to the right, across the harbor, across the bay. A big steamer for Baltimore was passing, far out, leaving a long trail of smoke. A full-rigged ship with all sails set was standing down for the Capes. Fishing smack were riding at anchor close in. Buck had never seen a vessel of any kind before, had never seen a sheet of water larger than Cove's Mill Pond. It was like a vision. "How wonderful it all is," he thought, and then he looked to the left across the Naval Academy grounds, the shade trees, the green lawn, the picturesque buildings, the monuments, and high up over all he saw the flag flying in the breeze.

"How glorious, how glorious it will be to serve under the flag all my life!" he exclaimed. "The thing to do now is to pass the examination!" He rejoined Preble and returned to his boarding house, resolved not to lose a minute from his books.

About ten o'clock that night Preble came into Buck's room. "Still studying, Buck? Didn't you hear the gun fire half an hour ago? Gun fire ends the day's work. It is certainly long enough, and only a half-hour's recreation remains before taps at ten."

"I have mapped out the remaining days up to eleven," said Buck. "I am so glad, Preble, that you are not to be bilged," he added.

"Buck, we must room together."

"That will be fine, but the thing to do now is for me to pass the examinations and get in."

"You stick at it better than I could, Buck. I am glad *I* don't have to pass the entrance examinations again."

Preble left, and Buck studied till eleven; then he read his chapter in the Bible, said his prayers, went to bed, and slept like a log till he was called at morning gun fire at six. Mrs. Connell let him have an early breakfast, and at seven he had begun the next day's work.

"I'd like to stay a little longer on algebra," he thought, "but I have carefully mapped out the time. To-day is for history."

He put the algebra aside and took up history, and allotted the time to various parts so as to complete the review by eleven o'clock that night, and he went through the day on schedule time.

Wednesday morning the physical examinations began. The matter was brought up at the breakfast table.

"How fast do they go, Preble?" asked Catell.

"About eight or ten a day."

"Then I am liable to come on late this afternoon, and," he added, "Jones will probably come on to-morrow afternoon. I will drop by his room and let him know."

They saw little of Buck during these days, but a strong liking was growing up between him and Catell. Catell

was three years his senior, and had come to realize that Buck's unusual powers of concentration were liable to cause him to overlook things not before him at the time.

"I am very much obliged for your coming to tell me, Catell. I will go down about three to-morrow," and he wrote this down on his schedule.

"Perhaps it might be well for you to let up on studying a little, especially for the sake of your eyes."

"I don't see how I can do it. Every minute of the time is now laid out, and the whole of to-morrow is for grammar."

When Buck appeared at "Sick Quarters" at three o'clock next day he had his grammar with him. The two candidates whose names preceded his alphabetically, Jenks and John, were still waiting. Buck sat down in the waiting room and soon became absorbed in his grammar.

"I don't see how Jones can study," said Jenks, "while a man is being examined in the next room."

But Buck's concentration was such that he was unconscious of what was going on until at last the attendant spoke to him.

"They are ready for you, sir."

Buck stripped in the dressing room, and stepped in before the two surgeons and recorder. One of the surgeons began to examine, and the recorder began to enter the record:

Name, Buchanan Polk Jones.

Age, 14 years, 7 months, 17 days.

Height, 5 feet, 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

Weight, 137 $\frac{1}{2}$ pounds.

Hair, light, medium.

Eyes, gray.

Chest, 33 inches.

Waist, 29 inches.

"Now draw a deep, full breath," directed the surgeon.

Chest expansion, $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

"I can do better than that," said Buck. "I am sure."

"It is not necessary to try again."

The second surgeon then began to thump on his chest and below and back of his shoulders.

"I wonder what those sounds mean," Buck said to himself with some apprehension. He had never seen or heard anything like that before.

The surgeon put his ear against the surface.

"Draw deep breaths."

Buck's apprehension increased.

"I wonder what he has found."

Then the surgeon applied the stethoscope over his heart and listened. Buck had never realized that he had any organs. He had never been sick since he had the measles as a very young child, and he remembered nothing unpleasant about them. He suddenly realized that he was full of "insides."

"Come and listen to this," said the surgeon, as he beckoned to the other one. The second one listened, and nodded his head.

"I'm lost," thought Buck.

"Stand at this mark," the first surgeon said, as he went over and uncovered lines of varying sizes of letters. "Can you read the letters in this line?" he asked, as he pointed to the third to the lowest.

"Yes, sir." Buck read them off.

"Can you read any in this line?" and he pointed one line higher.

"Yes, sir," and Buck read them off also.

"Can you make out any in this line?" and he pointed still another higher.

"Yes, sir. H—B—I can't quite tell whether the next is C or G."

"That will do."

"I wonder if I failed there, too," murmured Buck.

"Pick out the blues among these bunches of worsted."

Buck began to pick them out.

"What do you call this shade?"

"I don't know, sir. Bird's-egg blue? I have seen birds' eggs like it."

"Would you call this a blue?"

"I think not, sir. That is more a violet, though I don't know the name."

"Pick out the greens."

Buck began picking them out.

"Pick out the yellows—pick out the reds. Do you call this a red?"

"No, sir. I would call that a pink."

"Do you know the name?"

"I have heard that shade called ashes of roses, and I have seen it in the sky at sunset."

"That will do."

"I'm afraid I was very poor on that, too. How stupid I have been to go along all the time and not learn the names of colors that I continually see."

Then they blindfolded him.

"I wonder what this means!"

"Do you hear a watch ticking?"

"No, sir."

"Do you hear it now?"

"Yes, sir."

"Let me know when you cease to hear it. You still hear it?"

"Yes, sir. It has stopped now."

They took the bandage off.

"That is all."

"Wait a moment," said the second surgeon, and he tested Buck's eyes for vision at short distances. Then he tested for lateral range. "You may go now. Only a microscopic test remains."

It was six o'clock when Buck reached his boarding house, but he got in forty-five minutes on his grammar before the supper bell rang.

"How did you come out on the physical?" asked Catell.

"I think they found something wrong with my insides."

"You can never tell," said Preble, "until it is posted day after to-morrow."

Saturday morning, while Buck was absorbed in his review of arithmetic, Preble rushed into his room, panting:

"You passed, Buck."

"Passed what?"

"The physical."

"Oh, yes. Did Catell pass, too?"

"I didn't notice."

In fact, Preble had not noticed for anyone but Buck. He had been waiting at the Old Recitation Hall ever since eight o'clock for the results to be posted. When the list of those that had failed was finally put in the bulletin board, Preble ran over the list for the names beginning with J. Buck's was not there. He went over it again to make sure. Then he started for the boarding house, and didn't stop till he reached Buck's room.

"I am much obliged to you, Preble, for bringing me word," and Buck turned to his work, and was forthwith absorbed again. Later he learned that Preble had run the whole way.

"What a fine fellow he is," Buck thought to himself. Shortly after Preble left, to go back to the academy to read the list over at leisure, Catell came in.

"Jones, you passed all right."

"Did you pass, too, Catell?"

"Yes."

"I am so glad."

"Did Hank Pikeman pass?"

"Yes."

Buck said nothing.

"Little Harry Billerson failed. Deficient in height. He is only 4 feet 11½ inches, but he says the Secretary of the Navy promised his sister to waive the deficiency provided he would make it up during the first year."

"Ten failed out of fifty-one." Catell was always exact. "It was a stiff exam. You must be sound all the way through to have passed."

"I suppose so," said Buck, "but the surgeons both listened with the instrument over my heart and nodded to each other," and Buck turned to his work again.

The fact is, the surgeons were astonished at the strength of Buck's heart. When Buck left the examining room the first surgeon said: "Have you ever come across a pulse as low?"

CHAPTER VI

BUCK USES HIS KNOWLEDGE, AND LEARNS MORE

THE boarders were all assembled at the Sunday dinner table except Buck, who was a little late.

"Mr. Jones was in the confirmation class this morning," Mrs. Connell remarked.

"Indeed!" said several voices. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, I saw him confirmed myself."

"I am not surprised," said Catell.

"Nor am I," said Preble.

"What a queer, simple fellow he is," remarked Alboard.

"I am inclined to think with Mr. Moble that there is a great deal of show and hypocrisy under the cloak of religion," said Pikeman. He noticed there was very little sympathy in the looks of the guests, even of the candidates who had come to look upon everything he said as gospel truth. Mrs. Connell frowned distinctly. Nothing further was said on the subject, for Buck came in at that time, and ate his dinner quietly.

"Would you like to take a walk this afternoon, Catell?" he asked.

"I should love to go, but I must study up on algebra. It comes to-morrow, you know."

"I suppose you know everything in the algebra, the way you have been slaving, Mr. Jones," put in Pikeman.

"No; I didn't get to take up any original problems, and I feel weak on that account."

"Why don't you stay at home and study them up then, instead of going to walk," advised Preble.

"I have never studied on Sunday heretofore, and have decided to keep on the same way," answered Buck.

Pikeman smiled sneeringly to the other candidates.

Buck took a walk in the afternoon, and that night went to evening service. Then wrote to his mother:

"I have decided to write home every Sunday night, but I hope the family will write me two or three letters to my one. Your sweet letter that came Friday morning was a great treat. We don't have much affection up here, though there are two fellow boarders I am becoming very fond of, named Preble and Catell. I knew you would approve my decision to join the church. The Bishop is here, and I was confirmed with the others this morning. I wasn't quite sure that it was right for me to do so on account of the unsettled state of my faith, but I felt that I ought to do my part."

Buck took out his mother's letter and read it over again, and tears gathered in his eyes, in spite of his efforts to keep them back. He was strong and brave, but he missed the affection of home. The rigid routine he followed kept him absorbed during the week, but it left his heart hungry, and on Sunday the reaction came. He was very young for his boyhood to be cut off, and he craved the touch of his mother's hand. Since a tiny lad he had been accustomed to sit beside her and at her feet, and lay his head on her lap, and she would stroke his forehead and pass her fingers through his hair while the conversation went on.

The next morning at eight o'clock the forty-seven candidates were at their allotted desks in the armory, when

the algebra examination papers were distributed. Preble came down with Buck, though he did not have to take the examination himself. As they arrived a few minutes before eight, Preble said to Buck: "See that officer with the black mustache and black hair? That's Dodgeson. He's a math fiend; his eyes are like coals of fire."

When Lieutenant Dodgeson passed the examination papers around, the candidates quailed when his eyes caught theirs. Buck muttered to himself: "He must be a fiend."

"The dignified officer with the side whiskers," continued Preble, "is Billy Kendricks, head of the department. I think you will like him."

"I think I shall like him," said Buck to himself, as he saw Billy's genial smile.

"The space behind these partitions is for fencing," added Preble.

Buck was eager to see and begin fencing. He was fascinated with the armory, the long racks along the sides with the bright rifles glowing in the light, over the field pieces of artillery, rolled down to the other end, their muzzles looking straight at the candidates, the swords and cutlasses and bayonets against the partition arranged like stars and wheels. It was a sight to fascinate an eager, high-strung country boy with warm military blood driven with pressure through his veins.

But when the bell struck, Buck dropped the armory from mind, and concentrated his whole thought upon the examination paper. There were twelve separate "questions." Buck did not stop to read them over, but attacked the first question forthwith. In a few minutes it was done. Buck knew it was all right. The second question was likewise quickly dispatched—the third—the fourth—the fifth. "It is a very easy examination," he was saying to himself; the clock showed ten minutes past nine. He

had finished five questions in one hour and ten minutes. At that rate he would finish by eleven, and have one hour to spare. He wondered why Preble had cautioned him particularly to husband his time and not linger. He began to read the sixth question. He read it through, then read it over again carefully. He had never seen anything like that.

As he looked up from the second reading he saw Billy Kendricks smile. Billy had been watching him. It was the same smile of satisfaction he was destined to see many times in the section room. Original problems were Billy's cherished domain. He usually took the first section for himself, because he felt warranted in throwing original problems at the first-section men. He had had many years of experience, and maintained that the original problem is the true test of the pupil. Almost every examination in Billy's department had the original problem, but it was usually put at the end, and was extra. He had put this one in the middle, before enough questions had been completed to pass, in order to test the courage of the candidates, and then he sat watching the candidates as they reached the sixth question. He saw the first one glance at it, then skip it and pass on; the same with the next; he noticed that Catell read it through carefully, but then dropped it and went on; when he saw Buck read it through the second time, and then begin to figure on a piece of scribbling paper, deep in thought, he smiled radiantly. All the others in turn dropped it and went on. From this time Billy had eyes only for Buck. He saw him work for twenty minutes, then sit up and look at the result, and look at the clock, and think awhile, and take up another scribbling sheet and start again. For thirty-five minutes he worked without raising his head; then he stopped and thought for twelve minutes without working a figure, his

brow contracted in great concentration. He looked at the clock with a glance of apprehension, and took another scribbling sheet and began work, only to stop again, and start another sheet and then another. The clock struck eleven. The uneasy look on his face became tragic. Billy smiled through his whole being. No bliss of paradise could surpass this. Not that Billy was malicious; on the contrary, he was as kind and tender at heart as a woman, and that tragic look on the boy's face under any other circumstances would have brought out great fatherly sympathy. But in the struggle of a determined young mind to conquer a new foe in an unknown realm of mathematics, Billy saw the whole epitome of human life as it has gradually conquered nature. In such a struggle Billy saw the highest majesty of mind.

About 11.20 Buck sat up again. Billy never forgot the look on his face. It was even more than phenomenon of mind. It was the spirit grappling with the despair of the mind, wherein the soul proves its kinship to divinity. The boy's teeth were clinched; his actions were slow, deliberate; there was not a tremor; spirit held absolute dominion. He deliberately gathered up the trial sheets, examined them carefully, one by one, here and there copying their results on a fresh sheet. He jotted down what must have been a plan, then deliberately started again. Now and then he paused, but never raised his eyes once, not even when Dodgeson called out, "Fifteen minutes more, get your papers ready." Even Billy's heart began to melt with pity. He walked down the aisle and stood near Buck, and saw the last figures go down in a long chain of processes. As Buck stopped, Billy saw that he had the answer. Buck drew a double line under the answer, but never looked up as he took up the examination paper again. In seven minutes he had finished the seventh

question. Five minutes remained. Steadily and deliberately he went ahead on the eighth question. The clock struck twelve.

"Turn in your papers," called out Dodgeson.

Buck looked up and asked:

"May I have fifteen minutes more, sir?"

"No, sir, not a minute. Turn your papers in instantly," shouted Dodgeson, as he stamped his foot for emphasis.

"It is very different from the examination at the Summer College," reflected Buck, as he turned in his papers, knowing that in three minutes more he could have completed the eighth question, and in fifteen minutes could have been sure of passing.

"Let me have your scribbling sheet, Mr. Jones," directed Billy. Buck was very reluctant to turn in the evidences of his wild digressions, but he obeyed.

"Mr. Dodgeson, I will take and examine Mr. Jones's papers myself," and Billy gathered them all up and bore them away in triumph. As he left, he couldn't help confiding to Dodgeson, "I watched Mr. Jones put in exactly two hours and thirty-seven minutes on the sixth question."

"He must be close kin to a fool," remarked Dodgeson. But this retort did not disturb Billy's supreme satisfaction.

At the dinner table the candidates were exchanging notes on the examination. Everyone noticed how silent Buck remained.

"Did you pass, Jones?" asked Pikeman, with a malicious smile around the corners of his lips. He, too, had watched Buck during the examination, and guessed what was the matter.

"No, I failed," replied Buck.

Pikeman gloated.

"Did you try the sixth question?" asked Catell with sympathy.

"Yes," said Buck, "I began it at a little after nine and left it at twelve minutes of twelve."

"Of course he has failed," concluded Pikeman, and he laughed out loud.

"Did *you* try it, Hank?" asked Catell.

"No, I wasn't such a fool."

Buck didn't resent the imputation, but rather relished finding some one else of his own opinion.

At the examination in arithmetic the next day Buck found no difficulty in completing all the questions by 11.15. He sat around awhile, then turned in his papers. Catell, Gust, Pikeman, and a few others remained till the end.

"Jones, why did you leave so early?" asked Catell at dinner.

"I had finished."

"So had I finished, but I went back and checked up my work, and copied part of it over again. Everything counts. That's what the other fellows were doing."

This brought out Buck's weakness, if it was a weakness. His mind turned its power upon the main questions, and gave scant consideration to accessories. He would work out the last essential detail for his plan, but he would not pause a moment for appearances.

"I realized that I might make my papers look better, and there was ample time. Maybe I was too lazy to go over them again. Anyhow, I decided to come away and take up to-morrow's examination."

The next day the examination was grammar. Catell went over to Preble's room before breakfast, with a look of anxiety on his face.

"You know Jones better than the rest of us. Won't

you warn him to be careful about the form of his work, and the neatness and looks of his examination papers?"

"Yes," replied Preble. "It is very important, particularly with the present *régime* in the English Department."

"I need a little fresh air, and will walk down with you this morning, Buck."

"That will be nice, Preble," and the two left the boarding house together.

Preble took Buck by the arm as they walked along.

"You probably find the exams here different from those in Alabama."

"Very different, indeed."

"In the English Department, where you begin to-day, they are the worst sticklers for form and appearances I ever saw. It is all nonsense, of course, but they will cut your mark down mercilessly for the most trivial things. I have known them to bilge many bright cadets for nothing more than to neglect in form and neatness.

Buck drank it all in, and resolved to be particularly careful in everything.

Preble stopped Buck at the entrance of the armory.

"I see Billy Fray is in charge. He's the worst on earth! He's the professor in cits. The officer in uniform is Schyler, head of the department. You had better be on your guard." Preble turned back.

Buck went in with grave misgiving and found his desk. There was everything: a clean, new pad of large, heavy paper, prepared especially for the English Department; a bottle of ink, a fresh blotter, a new penholder and two new fine-pointed pens, all neatly arranged on the desk. Buck shrank back at the sight of the fine-pointed pens. If

there was anything in inanimate nature he hated, it was a fine-pointed pen.

When the candidates were all seated, Billy Fray struck the bell on the table and proceeded to give instructions. Billy held his face pointed upward at about the angle at which a mortar fires. "Write your name in full on the upper left-hand line of each sheet; use both sides, and number the pages consecutively in the upper right-hand corner, half an inch from each edge; leave a margin on the left-hand side of a half inch and on the right side of a quarter of an inch; allow an inch on the new line for a new paragraph, and skip a line for each new question. Copy each question, and allow a line before beginning the answer. When through, skip a line, and submit your papers according to the form prescribed by the U. S. Navy regulations for an official communication to a commanding officer. In this case, 'To Commander John Schyler, U. S. Navy, Head of Department of English Studies, History, and Law.' You may now begin."

The look of consternation on the faces of the candidates was something to make the angels weep.

"How much margin on the left?" asked little Harry Billerson.

"I *said* half an inch," answered Billy, showing his teeth with an unutterable scorn that made little Harry shrink still smaller. "Come up in person if you wish to ask me any questions."

A number went up. Each one received the look of scorn. When all had finished, Buck went up, calm, deliberate, but the picture of distress.

"Please, sir, may I have a stub pen?"

"No, sir; stub pens are for savages."

Buck went back to his desk and went ahead with the fine-pointed pen, though it was like agony. As he was

about to turn over the first page, he made a big blot with his new pen. Buck only completed the last question as Billy struck the bell.

"Stop work and arrange your papers. Verify that the pages are numbered consecutively. Don't forget to submit the papers as directed."

Buck submitted his paper:

"Respectfully submitted,

"BUCHANAN POLK JONES.

"To Commander John Schyler."

He was not certain about this being correct, so he summoned up courage and went up to Billy again.

"Is this the way you mean, sir?"

Billy took the page and looked at it, and his vials of wrath overflowed. To Buck the black of Billy's eyes seemed to cover the white.

"Commander John Schyler," he repeated, "Commander in the English Navy? Commander in the German Navy? Commander in the Japanese Navy? Or is he Commander in the Revenue, Marine, or Merchant service?"

Buck had no defense to make.

"Put 'U. S. Navy' after this, and add, 'Head of the Department of English Studies, History, and Law.'"

Commander Schyler, with tightly closed lips and almost ferocious eyes, stood behind Billy, the incarnation of pitiless power and authority.

Everybody loved Billy Fray, except candidates and plebes. He really had a most lovable nature. When he made his reports on the examinations, he took Buck's papers over with him.

"Here is an interesting case, Captain," he said to Schyler. "Young Jones, B. P., has shown a remarkable

grasp of the subjects, particularly in history where it touched on the navy, but I have never seen such lack of attention to form and appearances. Look at this page, for instance. There are no less than four blots on the one page, and the margin is as crooked as a rail fence, and look how the lines run uphill."

By Friday night the examinations were over. The names of those who had failed were to be posted Saturday morning, with notice of the time for reëxamination—the second examination to be final.

The boarders at Mrs. Connell's were figuring and comparing notes.

"Jones, you think you made it all right, except in algebra?" said Preble.

"Yes, I think so."

"It will be easy to make that on the reëxam."

"Give me exactly what you did," said Catell, as he began to figure. "The first seven questions, and part of the eighth; seven questions out of twelve would give you two-thirty-three. Seven-and-a-half questions would give you an even two-five."

"I got a little beyond the middle of the eighth," said Buck.

"Then if you were perfect in it all, you would have about two-fifty-one."

"Perfect in it all!" Buck smiled at the absurdity. They all knew there was no hope when he had only a margin of one hundredth to show.

Dodgeson went around to Billy Kendrick's office Friday night to report the list of those deficient in the Department of Mathematics.

"Here's the list for arithmetic complete. For algebra, the list lacks the name of your 'Spoon.' I suppose he made about one-eight."

"Your list must be complete," said Billy, with that matchless smile and twinkle of the eye, "for Mr. Buchanan Polk Jones made two-fifty-one, though he invaded the realms of calculus, analytical geometry and trigonometry, to do it." Billy spoke with that pride and joy that go only with a personal triumph.

The candidates gathered at the bulletin boards in the Old Recitation Hall the next morning, eager to know the worst. The lists sent pangs of disappointment and chagrin to many youthful hearts. Twenty-four out of fifty-one had failed.

The following Saturday was more tragic still. Fourteen out of the twenty-four failed on the reëxaminations, and went back to their homes crestfallen, where their mothers received them with outstretched arms, and took away the edge of disappointment by repeating, what was really true, that they were glad.

The most surprised of all the candidates was Buck, the happiest was Preble, and the most disappointed was Pike-man, when the list showed that Buck had passed. Catell rushed over to him.

"My congratulations. You worked the sixth question. There wasn't another man there who could have done it; there wasn't another who dared to try it. It is a greater victory than to have stood first."

As it turned out, with all the examinations included, Gust stood first, Catell second, Pikeman third, while Buck stood only eleven. It was a new experience for Buck. He had always stood first in everything. Preble was surprised that Buck didn't seem glad at passing on the first examination. On the contrary, he was unusually grave and quiet. Soon he guessed the source of his unhappiness.

"The entrance exams don't mean anything. I stood

high on the entrance exams last year, but I practically bilged on the first semi-ann."

This was not much comfort to Buck, nor was Catell's thoughtful compliment. There could be no comfort for him. He was constituted for leadership, and happiness was impossible so long as he was not first.

At the dinner table the exams made the topic of conversation. Slinginbury was very downcast. "How did you come out, Slinginbury?" asked Pikeman, who knew very well he had failed.

"I failed."

"What on?" came the cruel question.

"On spelling."

"I thought you had all of Turkey Tompkins's rules at your finger tips."

"I thought so, too, but I must have been rattled and applied them the wrong way. I remember now that I applied even the rule of pro, ex, and suc the wrong way."

Everybody else at the table was touched with sympathy at Slinginbury's abject humiliation; but a cruel smile played on Pikeman's lips.

The candidates who had passed were directed to report on the *Santee* Monday morning with their effects. All day Sunday they were busy getting their things together and checking them up according to the list required, and most of them had everything packed and ready Sunday night. Catell had his things ready before supper, but Buck never touched a thing. He went to church in the morning and at night, and read theology in the afternoon till four o'clock, then went on a long walk with Preble across the Spa Creek Bridge, then back along the water front. He loved to get where he could look out over the water. From the first he found in the water a companionship which men failed to supply.

"You had better hurry up with your packing, Buck, if you wish to get to the *Santee* in time for dinner formation."

The others had gone some time before. Buck was the last.

"Packing is a great nuisance," said Buck.

Mrs. Jones had always done the packing for Buck. She had packed his trunk with great care when he left home and the trunk seemed to hold everything easily; but when Buck now crushed in all that he could, it required his carpetbag bulged out to hold the overflow. Patrick Henry took charge of the trunk and Buck carried the bag and joined Preble, who was waiting for him below. Buck noticed that Preble cast curious looks at the bag, but without saying anything.

"I think we had better hurry, Buck," said Preble, with evident anxiety.

They had reached the grounds and were just turning out into the walk leading toward the Old Quarters, when Preble said:

"There they are."

"Who, Preble?"

"Don't you see them there, coming out of the Old Recitation Hall?"

There they were, the cadets, swarming out of the hall and forming in sections. As each section formed it started for the New Quarters independently of the rest, under the command of its own leader, who marched abreast of the section.

"I feared this, Buck. It is too bad. We shall have to pass them all."

"Can't we turn down this gravel path toward the monument and avoid them?"

"Not on our lives! That is Lovers' Lane. A plebe

is supposed to know nothing about love. We can't go there till we are third classmen."

"They have strange customs up here," thought Buck.

He saw that Preble was very much disturbed as the sections drew nearer.

"Don't say anything at all, Buck," warned Preble.

Buck began to feel queer in spite of himself.

"The section coming first are plebes, my classmates," whispered Preble.

Buck saw they were all looking at him. The blood rose to his cheeks. They were laughing.

"Who's your friend, Preble?" called one.

"That's Jo-Jo's carpetbagger," said another.

"What's that you are carrying, mister?"

The amusement was tremendous.

"Keep your heads to the front," ordered the section leader, as some were actually looking back over their shoulders at the strange sight.

The next section was also of plebes. They were even worse than the first one. They saw the fun farther ahead and were better loaded.

"Where did you get it, mister?"

"What have you got inside?"

"What do you call it?"

"Preble, where did you find him?"

Buck's blood was boiling. Preble seemed worried to death.

"Buck," he whispered, "that section ahead is third classmen. Jo-Jo is the leader. He is edging over this way, and there is Whaley urging him on. Let's cross over to pass on the other side," and Preble crossed over.

"I am going to stay on this side where I have been," replied Buck.

"Then you had better step out on the grass. Jo-Jo is coming straight for you."

"I will get out to the edge of the walk, but no farther," said Buck, between his teeth.

Jo-Jo's section saw the move, so did the section behind, made up of second classmen. They began to conjecture.

"I'll bet on Jo-Jo."

"So will I."

"No candidate or plebe ever stood up in front of Jo-Jo."

"I'll bet on the little carpetbagger," said Fonste, and the others laughed, but they stopped laughing suddenly for they saw the little carpetbagger plant his right foot on the edge of the walk, put down his bag and stand rigid. Jo-Jo was out on the edge marching straight down upon him. They saw the carpetbagger spread his feet to brace himself; he clenched his fists. All held their breath. Jo-Jo advanced his shoulder to take the impact, when he caught Buck's eyes. The look struck through his soul. It was such a look as cowers the wild beasts. Conscious that all eyes were on him, that his hazer's pride and reputation were at stake, conscious of the guying he would receive and driven by a dislike already burning deep, conscious of the backing of Whaley and of the others, and that he was six inches taller and much heavier, he yet was powerless to control his actions. He was conquered by an indomitable will. He suddenly stepped aside and passed close.

"Good for the carpetbagger! It took nerve."

"Fonste, you win," said the second classmen.

Buck picked up his bag and started ahead.

"I dare *you* to try him, Orman," said one of the second classmen to the section leader.

"Not much. I'm going to give him half the walk; he has fairly won it."

When Jo-Jo's section broke ranks in front of the New Quarters, Whaley came up and said:

"Jo-Jo, you are an infernal coward."

"You don't understand, Whaley. It was out in the open. Officers could see it. It could be seen from the officer-in-charge's office, and you know they are laying for us. If they can only half prove a case, they will dismiss us for hazing."

"Then why did you challenge?"

"I thought, of course, he would give way. They have always done it. Didn't you see how Preble scooted?"

Jo-Jo's mind had been actively at work upon explanations; but these couldn't save him, especially from the second classmen.

"How is your carpetbagger?" they would ask with a smile.

"I notice that Jo-Jo has suddenly stopped talking about his carpetbagger," remarked Fonste a few days later.

Jo-Jo had stopped talking, but he hadn't stopped thinking and hating.

Buck joined Preble when the sections had passed. He stood looking at the Midshipmen's Monument, erected to the midshipmen who died heroically at Vera Cruz. Preble pointed out the Naval Institute Building.

"They have the trophy flags in there that we captured, running as far back as the days of John Paul Jones," he said.

"John Paul took the name of Jones from one of my ancestors. Can't we go in?" asked Buck.

"Not now. It is too late. We barely have time to get to the *Santee* for dinner formation. This building is the old mess hall. We shall eat here in September when the September plebes come in and all the other classes are away on leave."

"What is this?" inquired Buck, as he stopped with a look half of mirth, half of awe, in front of a huge figure of an Indian chief.

"That is the figure head of the old frigate *Delaware*. It is doubtless meant to represent the great chieftain Delaware, for whom the State and river are named. Cadets have come to call this the God of Two-five."

"Do you remember about the *Delaware*?"

"No; but I think Tim Casey could tell you about her. She was still in commission in his day."

"These are the Old Quarters where the first division is quartered, from the Old Recitation Hall here to the building down there where you see the ship's bell. Beyond there the rest of Stribling Row is bachelor officers' quarters."

"What a grand baseball and football field from here over to those buildings. What are they?"

"They are marine barracks. After you have been here a year you will think of this more as a field for drilling. They will trot your legs off, in double quick in infantry, and you will wish you were dead when you are on the end of the drag rope with the howitzers, in artillery, going across at a dead run."

"It must be great sport."

"You will think it is sport up to the day of the first drill—no longer. That lone oak has come down with the ages. It frequently breaks the middle of the line in drills, and sometimes it receives a home-run ball in center field, but everybody loves it. It is all bound up with iron bands and tie rods. The man would be mobbed who dared suggest cutting it down." Preble paused. "Hello, Buck," he suddenly cried, "there comes the Superintendent's orderly bearing down on us." Sure enough, coming across the lawn from the Superintendent's house, Buck saw the same marine he had seen when he went to report.

The orderly came up straight to Buck and saluted, and Buck lifted his hat.

"The Superintendent's compliments. He desires to know the name of the gentleman carrying the bag."

"Buchanan Polk Jones."

"Buchanan Polk Jones," the orderly repeated as he saluted, faced about and was off. Buck raised his hat again.

"Preble, what's up? Is it against regulations to carry a bag in the yard?"

"No, not when you are moving in. I think Rumsey caught on to you and Jo-Jo. He was probably on his way to lunch, or had just come in. You see his house is straight down the walk. He must have seen Jo-Jo's move and your stand. I think he is watching Jo-Jo and Whaley and that gang, anyhow. By the way, Buck," continued Preble, apologetically, "you don't have to raise your hat to an orderly. He is only a marine. You know they are enlisted men, while you have the status of an officer. Of course, it is all right to return his salute, or the salute of any inferior in rank."

"You wouldn't think a plebe was very much from the way the other classes treat him."

"No, and he is on the lowest rung in the whole line of officers, and at times he is liable to forget this fact. That is the basis for the very strict treatment and for the 'running' of the plebes by the upper classes to teach them subordination. The idea even runs in their treatment by officers and professors."

"Like Billy Fray," suggested Buck.

"Exactly. Of course, there are many cadets who abuse this and go to extreme lengths in hazing. Some are even vicious and brutal. Against these the law is rigid. Hazers, if detected, are court-martialed and, if found guilty,

are dismissed. Bear in mind that within reasonable limits it is a universal custom, and intended as discipline for subordination. It is best to take it without murmuring."

"I won't mind their running," said Buck, "and I am prepared to do anything they say, but I don't believe I can stand Jo-Jo. I think he wants to bully me. He's mean."

"You are right about Jo-Jo; but I advise you to avoid him all you can. He won't get a chance at us until next winter and then he will be a second classman, and second classmen with their growing dignity are supposed to taper off on 'running' plebes."

"What is that round stone building ahead?"

"That's the 'gym.' It is old Fort Severn, just as it stood in the past. Upstairs is the gymnasium and it is used for the hops, except the June ball, which is held in the armory. We turn here," and they swung sharp to the left. Suddenly Buck stopped.

"Oh, what a curious-looking thing! What is that?" he cried.

"That is the old submarine, captured from the Southerners during the war."

"Are you sure it was captured? It was probably surrendered at the end of the war. My father told me about those submarines. The men who went in them were the bravest men that ever lived. All volunteers, they weren't the least afraid to die. I don't think anybody could capture their boat. They would have gone down with it, as they did many times."

"I don't know the history of the boat. Maybe Tim Casey does. But I know it belonged to the Confederates. Nobody else has ever built anything like them."

"Preble, you came from Maine and I came from Alabama, but we are all right about the war, aren't we?"

"Yes, indeed."

Buck longed for a chance to show the world how Alabamians feel toward the flag.

"There's where you must go this afternoon to be measured for your uniform, and the Paymaster's office is upstairs where you will make the deposit to cover the part of the outfit that you now lack."

"Oh, there are the ships!" exclaimed Buck with delight as he looked ahead.

"The first is the *Dale*, the next is the *Wyoming*, the low one out in the river is the monitor *Passaic*, and the one at the end of the wharf, roofed over like a barn, is the old *Santee*," said Preble.

They had reached the boat shed at the head of the wharf. Buck was just formulating questions about the history of the ships when they heard the bugle below.

"That's dinner formation for the *Santee's* squad."

Both began to run. Buck's bag was a serious impediment. After trying one method after another, he finally put it on his shoulder and tore down the wharf behind Preble. Everybody saw them coming.

Was he going to be late at the very first formation? With the thought Buck fairly flew. The squad was formed, only waiting for the bugle blast to face to the left. The officer of the day was at the far end.

Preble ran up, saluted and reported and slipped in the ranks just as the officer of the day ordered, "Left, face!" The squad faced as Buck tore by with his bag, half stumbling as he took it down from his shoulder.

Buck's face was flushed with the running and the excitement, as he shifted the bag over to his left hand and tried to salute with his right hand as he had seen the orderly do.

"You are late, sir. I will report you. Fall in on the

left." Buck started down in front of the squad, bag in hand.

"Come back, sir, and go around the rear."

Buck's face was crimson as he turned and for the third time passed along in front with his bag. He passed around the rear and took his place on the left, the bag still in his left hand.

"Mr. Gust, step to the front. Take this list and muster the squad."

Gust proceeded to muster. Buck was painfully aware of the fact that he couldn't possibly march with his bag in his hand. What was he to do?

Gust completed the muster and reported. A silence followed. Buck knew that the officer of the day was looking at him. The cold sweat stood out on his brow.

"Mr. Jones," began the officer of the day slowly, with tones of authority that struck terror to Buck's very soul, "how do you expect to march with that object in your hand?"

Another silence followed, heavy in its oppressiveness. Buck felt the weight as of a leaden load on his shoulder.

"Take two steps to the rear, sir, and drop it—step to the front again."

Buck stepped back in position.

"Master-at-arms!" called out the officer of the day toward the *Santee*.

"Sir?" came the answer. The master-at-arms had been watching the painful performance, biting his lips to keep from laughing.

"Take this object on the wharf and put it in the lucky bag."

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the master-at-arms.

"Squad, left, face!"

Buck had never seen a military drill in his life, but

he managed to face with the rest. This left him at the head of the column. What next, he wondered.

“Forward, march!”

Buck stepped out, but with the wrong foot. The man behind stumbled on his heels. This caused confusion for some distance along the column.

“Mr. Jones, keep step there.” Left, left, left! They drew near to the turn in the wharf. Buck wondered how they would change. “Column, left!” Buck turned. “March! Mr. Jones, wait till the order ‘March!’ Left, left, left!” They reached the turn in front of the gymnasium. “Column, right, march!” “I got it that time,” thought Buck with satisfaction. “Left, left, left!”

“Mr. Gust, give the squad the step all the way,” and Gust began: “Left, left, left!” As they reached the Midshipmen’s Monument, “Column, left, march!” Buck was actually proud of his performance this time, and was eager for the next trial at the band stand. “Column, right, march! Left, left, left!”

They approached Main Street that prolongs Maryland Avenue. Buck began to feel queer. There were cadets, a big crowd of them, sitting on the cannon-backed seats directly ahead, watching the squad. There was always a peculiar interest in the first appearance of the new plebes, dressed in their varying civilian suits and hats, reflecting the styles all over the land, from the ranch in Texas to Fifth Avenue in New York.

“Left, left, left!” Straight into the jaws of the upper classmen they went. Buck recognized Jo-Jo in the crowd, and heard him pass the word, “The carpetbagger is at the head of the column.”

Down the steps, across the street. “Column, left, march!” Buck turned as though he were a veteran. “Column, right, march!” They swung between the

seats of cadets square down the walk. "Fins out! Fins out! Fins out! Fins out, there, mister!" came from the upper classmen.

"Squad, halt!"

The bugle blew. The upper classmen passed.

"Where is the carpetbagger?"

"Is this the carpetbagger?"

"Show me the gally carpetbagger."

What a relief to Buck when they were all by, and the bugle sounded.

"Squad, left, face!"

"Mr. Gust, take charge of the squad, and when the battalion executes 'Fours right,' go 'Right face,' and march to the mess hall, taking the first table on the right."

With these instructions the officer of the day left.

The battalion was "dressed" to the right. The first sergeants marched to the front and center and reported. The adjutant read the orders.

"Battalion, fours right, march!"

Buck recognized Tyler, the four-striper. How grand to stand out there and command the battalion!

"Must I be four-striper myself our first class year?"

Buck considered the matter carefully. He noticed that Tyler sat at the officer-in-charge's table. He must have a good chance to ask about things at large.

He looked at Tyler more closely at supper formation. By the time he went to sleep that night he had made up his mind to be four-striper. Doubtless other plebes made the same resolve that first day; but a resolve to them was not like a resolve to Buck.

When all had entered the mess hall and the new plebes had been placed, with Gust at one end of their table and Catell at the other, Tyler gave the order, "Seats!" Such a roar and rattle of chairs Buck had never heard. Most of

the new plebes kept their eyes on their plates during the meal; but Buck was very much interested in the trophies about the walls—trophies of victorious baseball nines, boat crews, football teams. Preble, who sat opposite, seemed uneasy.

“Buck, they will think you are gally looking around like that.”

But Buck couldn't see any objection. Soon he became aware that many upper classmen were looking at him, and across the room was Jo-Jo with his scowl. It became clear that those who recognized him were pointing him out to the others. He even detected the officer-in-charge as he asked the officer of the day from the old quarters, the one who had the duty of marching the *Santee* squad, to point him out. The officer of the day told how the carpetbagger had come to formation, and they had a good laugh.

“I like him,” said Tyler.

Buck couldn't understand it all, and he felt very uncomfortable. The truth is, the incident of Jo-Jo and the plebe carpetbagger had gone all over the academy, the Superintendent himself having started it among the officers.

Buck was still eating when Tyler, upon the nod from the officer-in-charge, struck a bell and ordered, “Rise, march out!” The new plebes were the last to leave, and as they passed out the upper classmen were lingering in the corridor, in the hall, on the steps, and were even out on the walk where the plebes formed. No circus parade could have been looked at more eagerly than the new plebes at their first meal.

As the plebes passed out of the mess-hall door, the congestion gave upper classmen a good chance.

“Mister, are you going to try to go through on your muck?” asked one of them as he edged up close to Buck.

"I don't know what that is."

"Put on 'sir' when you speak to a superior in rank."

"He must be a very important cadet, probably next to Tyler, though he looks very small and young," thought Buck.

It was little Stratford, still a plebe, and the smallest and youngest plebe, as Buck learned later, who had that proud and important air.

"Look the other way, you gally plebe!"

"Take your greasy eyes off me!"

"Fins out there, fins out!"

Such were the remarks hurled at the trembling plebes as they passed through the upper classmen. All came in for a share, but Buck was evidently the "favorite."

Jo-Jo and Whaley and some other third classmen were standing on the stoop by the old gun at the entrance.

"Did you ever see anything so gally as he was at dinner?" Buck heard Jo-Jo say to Whaley. He couldn't hear Whaley's reply.

It was all new to Buck. On the march down to the *Santee* he was pondering over the situation. It was a good deal like an affront, he thought. He was still undecided whether he would submit or not when they reached the *Santee's* wharf and broke ranks. Buck joined Preble at once. He needed some light.

"Preble, what *does* 'Fins out' mean?"

"It means to place your little fingers at the seams of your trousers, with the palms forward. The position helps to give a military bearing."

"Oh, that's all right. What is it 'to go through on your muck'?"

"That's to fight your way through. Several have tried it, but only one man has gone through on his muck since the academy began, and they say he was mean and was

later dismissed from the service. Did anyone ask you that?"

"Yes, several did."

"What did you answer?"

"I told them I didn't know what they meant."

"Buck, you are getting into a bad position—not that you mean anything. I advise you to be more careful. It is part of the *régime* to be humble and subordinate to the last degree during the plebe year. It has always been that way. I advise you to be careful to put on 'sir,' and to do anything and everything they tell you, and do it in a good-natured, willing, obedient spirit. It won't do you any harm and it will be much easier for you. Everybody does that way."

"Did Tyler do that way, and did the officers we see do that way when they were cadets?"

"Of course they did."

Buck couldn't reason it all out, but he concluded Preble was right.

"Preble, do you know what a 'lucky bag' is?"

"I should think so, as many times I have had things get in the lucky bag."

Preble said this considerably. He knew that Buck was thinking about his bag. But Buck was most concerned as to the offense he might have committed.

"Aboard ship, when anything private is left about the decks, instead of being stored away in the proper place, it is put in the lucky bag and confiscated."

He saw Buck's eyes open wider.

"This is to teach the necessity for order, and has been found the best way to cure carelessness, which can't be tolerated aboard ship, where everything is so crowded anyhow. In the case of cadets, instead of confiscating the object, they return it and give demerits."

"How many, Preble?"

"Three for each offense."

"How many for being late at a formation?"

"Three also."

"Six demerits," meditated Buck. "This is a strange place."

Buck had never had six demerits in his whole life before.

"I will have to explain it at home," he thought, as he and Preble went over the gangway of the *Santee* with the rest of the squad.

Before breaking ranks the officer of the day directed that those who had not been to the tailor shop and the Paymaster's office should go without delay and should procure hammock mattresses, and all the articles of outfit specified in the catalogue; that the hammock numbers and locker numbers would be found on the bulletin board posted on the gun deck.

CHAPTER VII

BUCK FINDS HIS BERTH ON THE *SANTER*

IT was a busy afternoon for the new plebes. Buck hadn't more than time to glance over the spar deck and then the gun deck with their broadsides of big muzzle-loading guns, and feel the thrill that the guns inspired. He hastened down on the berth deck and was soon employed in unpacking his trunk and getting his things into his locker. He had to stoop considerably to clear the deck beams overhead. Faint cylinders of light came through the air ports and were aided by three fixed oil lamps, one forward against the washroom bulkhead, one against the mainmast, and one aft against the brig bulkhead. Each plebe had a portable candle in addition.

There were thirty-seven of them in all, but as Buck looked over the deck, with the trunks and valises strewn about, it seemed that there were a hundred, nearly all of them new faces, though here and there he saw one of Mrs. Connell's boarders.

Buck's locker was number seventeen, up near the washroom. Preble's was on the other side of the deck. Pike-man's was down near the brig. Catell's was only a few lockers away. Harry Billerson's was the next locker forward.

"My name is Jones. What is your name?" Buck promptly asked the one next to him aft.

"Henderson."

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Henderson. Introduce me to the gentleman beyond you?"

It wasn't long before Buck had met nearly all those in his vicinity, and they knew at once that he was from the South.

"What State are you from, Mr. Henderson?"

"From Kentucky."

"That must be a fine State. The best horse we have at home is from Kentucky."

"What State are you from, Mr. Jones?"

"I'm from Alabama. Mr. Thompson, what is your State?"

"Tennessee."

"That's a fine State, next to Alabama. Some of my people came from there. Of course, I make no reflection on Kentucky," he nodded to Henderson.

These three were to become good friends.

By three o'clock all trunks and valises were off the deck on the way to the storage room. Buck's trunk was among the last. Preble and Catell were helping him toward the end. They saw he was in trouble, and warning word had been passed by the master-at-arms. Buck was becoming desperate and began jamming his things into the small locker. He had been accustomed to having a wardrobe full of drawers and a closet, and his mother had always superintended the servants to keep his things in order.

"That will never do, Buck." Catell had come to call him Buck. "The lockers will be inspected to-morrow morning, Preble says," and he began helping Buck get some order out of the confusion.

Buck had been looking at a marine at the other end of the deck standing on guard. When Preble came up he asked what he was doing.

"He is keeping watch over some third classmen who are in solitary confinement."

"What are they in confinement for?"

"For frenching. They are in Jo-Jo's gang. The whole gang came near being caught, but the others got away from the watchman, who came up as they were climbing back over the wall behind the Sick Quarters."

"How many are there confined?"

"Two."

"For how long?"

"One of them for seven days, the other till further orders, which means that his case is still under consideration. He may be dismissed."

"Why, was he worse than the others?"

"They found a flask of whisky under his blouse, and it is rumored that he made a false statement about it."

"It looks like a prison back there," continued Buck.

"It is a prison in effect. They have enlarged and fitted up the old brig of the ship and use it to confine cadets."

"What is the brig?"

"It's the prison cell, where the men are confined."

This made Buck very thoughtful. He had never considered this phase. The inside, practical part of naval life was coming upon him fast, with the inevitable effect of disenchantment. But the mood could not last in the face of Buck's idealism and innate optimism.

"I suppose they have to have punishments, but it's a glorious thing, after all, to have a chance to devote your whole life to the service of the flag. And even if they have had to put some men in the brig, the navy has made a wonderful record."

These meditations didn't help Buck's unpacking, and it required the aid of Catell and Preble to get him through

in time. Then the three went off together to the tailor and storekeeper. Preble didn't have to get any new things for himself, but he wanted to be with Buck; not only because he liked Buck, but also because he wanted to give him points. While Buck was in with the Paymaster, Preble began talking about him.

"I'll never forget the way he squared himself and faced Jo-Jo, if I live to be a hundred. At the same time I never saw a chap so green about practical little things. He is bound to get lots of demerits."

The Paymaster at this moment was adjusting with Buck the amount to be allowed for his traveling expenses. When asked how much they were, Buck figured a little.

"Thirty-one dollars and sixty-five cents," he said.

"What are the items?"

"Ticket to Selma; ticket to Atlanta; ticket to Washington; ticket to Annapolis; total, thirty-one dollars and sixty-five cents."

"What did you spend on the sleeper?"

"Nothing; I didn't know there was a sleeper."

"What on your meals?"

"Nothing; I brought my meals with me."

"How long was the trip?"

"Three days and a half."

"How were you able to carry enough for three days and a half?"

The Paymaster genuinely enjoyed talking to the frank, naïve little man.

"Oh," said Buck, with pride, "I had some left over when I reached Mrs. Connell's. The carpetbag my mother made will hold a lot. On a camp hunt I have carried enough to last nearly a week."

The Paymaster smiled. He had heard of that carpetbag already.

"But the meals must have cost something and the Government provides for same. What do you think would cover the amount? Do you think that an average of fifty cents a meal would cover it?"

"Oh, I don't think it could have been as much as that, sir. We raised the chickens and the eggs, and the pickles were homemade and the ham came from the plantation, and I think they hardly missed the other things at all."

"The Paymaster is a fine man," said Buck as he came out, which was his way of saying he liked a man.

"Yes, indeed he is," replied Preble. "Everybody likes Paymaster Sambis. Of course, he has to keep strict accounts, but he always likes to accommodate you. It does him a lot of good for a cadet to have plenty of money on the books when he comes to go on leave."

"Let's go around the gymnasium on our way back," Buck suggested, and the three friends circled the old fort. Buck stopped when all the old cannon came in view mounted in a surrounding semicircle.

"Where did these come from?"

"I don't know," replied Preble. "From some of our old ships, I think."

And Buck's imagination began immediately picturing deadly battles where the guns had won glorious victories for the flag.

"What gun is that, mounted out over the sea wall?"

"That's the gun they fire."

"We shall get the full benefit on the *Santee*," thought Buck. He gazed from the *Santee* out over the bay. "Preble, what is that tall thing out on the point?"

"That's Greenbury Point Lighthouse, and the object on legs farther out to the right is the Spider Lighthouse, on the shoals off the entrance of the bay. Lord, how many questions you can ask!"

But Buck was fascinated. They had to threaten him with being late for supper formation to get him away. As they passed the *Dale*, Preble said:

"Buck, you see that tall, gaunt-looking old salt on the forecastle there? That's Tim Casey."

Buck gazed at him closely and began to imagine the wonderful things that Tim had seen in his day.

"Preble, what do they call that flat?" asked Buck, as he pointed up the mast when they passed the *Wyoming*.

"That's the maintop."

"Is there anybody on board the *Wyoming*?"

"No, they take care of her from the *Santee*. The Saturday-morning cruises are over. They won't use her again till the seamanship drill for the Board of Visitors in graduation week."

Buck was in ample time for supper formation and fell in at his regular place—according to height—the highest on the right. He began to take note of things and noticed that he came a little above the middle. Rix, a robust six-footer from Michigan, was at the head, in the front rank, with Ninman, a slim New Jerseyite, behind him. Then came Parsons from South Carolina, and Dillon from California. Buck listened attentively to all the names as Gust called them off. Some were strange names to Buck, of Swedish, Polish, German, and other foreign origin. Buck was interested to know what kind of men they were that had the curious names, so he spent some time after the return from supper going about among them, as they wrote letters on the tables on the gun deck or arranged their lockers, getting acquainted.

"They are just like everybody else," he concluded.

When everything was still he slipped off and went out on the wharf and sat down on a spar to look out over the water by night. The wind was still; the lighthouse

gleamed afar, the light sending out intermittent shafts; the lamps along the sea walls made paths of light across the shifting water; the stars sparkled in their reflections; the water licked the piles.

"It is so still and yet so restless," murmured Buck, and a feeling of mystery and loneliness came over him. After a while he went back on board and looked up Preble.

"What time is it, Preble?" he asked.

"Nearly three bells. Let's go up and see the gun fire."

They went up. Ding, ding—ding! A flash and a crash! Buck jumped, but regained his control instantly, flushing with enthusiasm.

Preble was accustomed to the gun fire and was not very romantic or enthusiastic.

"It's all right as long as it fires a blank charge," he said, noticing Buck's interest.

Buck was a little ashamed of the way he had jumped. Every night he went up until the flash and crash failed to cause a muscle to twitch.

Pikeman, like a politician, had begun to lay the wires to be elected class president. He had noticed with uneasiness how the others began to like Buck as soon as they met him, and he viewed with suspicion Buck's action as he spoke heartily to everyone. As the time approached now for taps, Buck looked about the deck to see if the others were going to say their prayers. He thought everyone said his prayers before going to bed. He always said his and had always done so since before he could remember. The time was getting short. No one made a move, but, getting ready to turn in, the others continued laughing and joking. Some had begun to climb into their hammocks.

"Shall I say my prayers in my hammock? That is

what the rest are probably going to do," said Buck to himself.

The time limit was up.

He had always knelt down to say his prayers. It went against his grain not to do so now, yet he hesitated. Then with sharp self-scorn he suddenly knelt down, with his elbows on his camp stool on the open deck, and said his prayers.

Pikeman turned to Ninman and Rix and the rest of the group around him, and pointed over to Buck.

"Did you know we had a parson on board?" he said, with a sneer.

At the morning gun fire Buck was out of his hammock with a bound.

"It's great, sleeping in a hammock," he said to Preble as they met in the washroom and lined up to take turns at the limited number of basins. "I didn't turn over once."

It was a beautiful spring morning. The bay was a field of leaping diamonds. The sparkling lawn seemed to speak to the trees and the green leaves answered back. As the squad marched through the beautiful grounds Buck's heart sang the same hymn that came from the heart of all nature, that it was glorious to be part of creation. The spell remained on him even into the breakfast formation. Suddenly he came down to the earth with a thud. The adjutant was reading his own name on the conduct report.

"Jones, B. P., late at dinner formation."

There was no mistake. The words rang in Buck's ears.

"Same, carpetbag in the lucky bag."

An audible titter passed over the battalion.

"Put Mr. Kerr on the report for smiling in ranks,"

said the officer-in-charge, as he came slowly along the opened ranks in his inspection.

Buck began to feel nervous as his turn drew near. The officer stopped in front of him, and looked him over from head to foot.

"What is your name?"

"Jones, sir."

Buck felt guilty.

"Put Mr. Jones on the report for clothes not brushed."

The officer of the day wrote down the memorandum.

As they marched into the mess hall, Buck was meditating, "Nature is very beautiful, but naval life is a stern reality."

When Tyler struck the bell the battalion rose, but no order to "March out!" followed. Chaplain Dawson entered from the door on the left, raised his hands and all heads were bowed. Buck felt a peculiar inspiration as the clear, impressive, manly voice of the Chaplain offered up thanks and besought God's blessings upon our great country and upon the institution given to its service.

"I am so glad that I am an American," pondered Buck, and the spell was not broken even when Whaley came close and demanded:

"Mister, did I see you drinking milk?"

"Yes, sir."

"What do you mean by it? Knock it off."

When they broke ranks at the *Santee*, Buck asked Preble what Whaley meant.

"Oh, plebes are not allowed to drink milk, except on the cruise."

In a half hour the squad marched to the armory, Gust in charge for "Setting up" exercises and marching drill. Corbezier, the old sword master, was in charge, giving his orders with a sharp, foreign accent and rolling his "R's."

Buck took a great fancy to Corbezier and asked Preble all about him. Preble said there was much mystery connected with his past, the tradition being that he had once been in the French army, was a famous duelist, and on account of a duel in which he killed his opponent had been compelled to flee the country.

"Such a fencer!" went on Preble. "There has never been his like in America. He is getting along in years, but is as limber and quick as a cat. Most of the routine teaching of fencing falls on the assistant sword masters, Keintz and Betz, but Corbezier soon takes the best ones himself."

"I am going to get with Corbezier," resolved Buck. "When do we begin to take fencing?"

"Not till next year."

Buck was greatly disappointed.

From the armory the squad went to the natatorium to learn swimming. About half could swim and about a third could swim well enough not to return. Buck was the first that Storm, the master of physical training, told he need not come again.

"You have a good stroke, Mr. Jones and your breathing is all right."

"May I come back, anyhow?"

"Certainly. Whenever you wish. I will give you a few points that will help you in a sea way."

Buck went every day.

At dinner formation Buck was startled when the adjutant, after reading the detail for the next day, ordered:

"Jones, B. P., will report to the Commandant immediately after dinner."

Buck's messmates were all excited and Buck was in great anxiety himself during the meal; but they wondered how undisturbed he seemed.

"Report to the officer-in-charge first," whispered Preble as they came out.

"The Commandant will see you at once," said the officer-in-charge when Buck reported.

Buck crossed the entrance and entered the Commandant's office. Commander Carrington sat behind a large, heavy table with the conduct report spread out before him. "Spuds" Carrington was one of the most feared Commandants that ever held the office.

"Mr. Jones," he began, in measured, suggesting tones, more like a question than a statement, "I notice that you have sent in no excuse or explanation for being late at dinner formation yesterday. What was the matter? Were you delayed on the way?"

"Not for any length of time."

"How did your bag get adrift?"

"The officer of the day ordered me to drop it on the wharf."

"That will do, sir."

Buck left. When the conduct report was posted Buck found: "For being late, no excuse. Demerits, 3. For bag in lucky bag, excuse accepted."

"Preble," said Buck, "the Commandant is just. It was my fault for being late, but it was not my fault about the lucky bag."

"'Spuds' is a terror for discipline, but I think you will find that he is always just," answered Preble.

When Buck had told about the interview Preble observed:

"He was after Jo-Jo when he asked if you had been delayed."

In the afternoon the squad had "boats under oars" and "gymnasium." Buck was delighted with both.

CHAPTER VIII

BUCK MAKES A NEW FRIEND AND ENCOUNTERS AN OLD ENEMY

ON board the *Santee*, about half an hour before supper formation, the plebes dropped in sheer exhaustion, some on camp stools, some on the deck. Buck slipped off without being noticed and went aboard the *Wyoming*. He had made up his mind to climb up to the maintop. He reached the rigging and began to climb. It was a new experience. It was like climbing rope ladders.

He held tightly to the shrouds and took each step carefully. He reached the futtocks under the top and carefully passed between them. Finally he reached the lubber's hole, drew himself up through on his elbows, then stood up and looked out at the ship below, at the other ships, at the academy grounds, at the river, at the bay. In his enthusiasm, and almost ecstasy of delight, he couldn't help saying out loud:

"This is great!"

"Yes, sir," replied a voice from behind the mast.

Buck stood petrified. Was it a spirit? The weird sensation was quickly dispelled. A gaunt-looking sailor, with deep-set eyes and gray hair and mustache, looked around the mast from his seat on the maintop chest. Each wondered what the other was doing up there. Buck went around the mast.

"You are Tim Casey, the boatswain's mate?"

"That's my name."

"I am Buck Jones, one of the new plebes."

Tim was surprised that Buck should know him, but pleasure was evident on his weather-beaten face. Buck's outspoken frankness went straight to the old salt's heart.

"My friend, Preble, has told me about you. I hope you are going on the cruise with us."

"Indeed I am. The crew on the *Dale* are going to be transferred to the *Constellation* to-morrow. The *Constellation* ought to be here now from Norfolk."

"Did you come up here to sight her?"

Tim's face beamed at the naïve question.

"Not exactly, though she's a fine old ship; one of the few left now."

Buck saw that he loved the old ships and the old days.

"I came over here to see what I could pick up for my starboard watch. Here's a marline spike or two, some ratlin stuff, a few thimbles and a ball of rope yarn. This jigger will come in handy. Some day when all hands are called to reef topsails and the weather sheet won't go down, the first lieutenant will call out, 'Clap on a jigger!' and before the captain of the maintop comes with his gear, I'll have this jigger on and be piping away."

Buck was delighted.

"But I haven't found much. In these new days of regulations and checking up everything, foraging don't do you much good. Even a quartermaster can't find anything of account."

Buck guessed, as he learned later, that the boatswain's mate and quartermaster, and even captain of the tops, used to go around the navy yards picking up things for their parts of the ship. Some were noted for their aptitude in this line. Many a time in an emergency the execu-

tive officer would see things appear that he didn't know were on board.

Buck thought it was time for him to say something.

"This is a fine ship, the *Wyoming*."

"Nothing but an old tub, sir."

Buck was shocked by this sweeping condemnation.

"But it has steam and sails both."

"A mongrel. Nothing good ever came out of a mongrel."

"Didn't Farragut use them?" Buck was sure he had won the argument by citing this authority.

"Yes, sir, Farragut used them because the other fellows used them and because he had to go up rivers. But he never liked them. One day on the *Hartford* he came up from the engine and boiler rooms, when the brasses had gotten hot and the boiler tubes were leaking, and I said to him: 'Capt'n'—you know I never called him 'Admiral,' not I, when I had called him 'Capt'n' ever since I sailed with him when he was a lieutenant—says I, 'Capt'n, how do you like steam?' and he turned to me and says, says he: 'Tim, those infernal engines worry me to death. I don't mind the enemy, but what can a man do when his boiler tubes are leaking?' I felt sorry for him, and I hated the engine and I hate one still. They are the invention of the devil to spoil the life on the high seas. And these men they enlist for coal heavers, and oilers and what not; they are blasted land lubbers—the last mother's son of them."

Supreme scorn stood out in every feature of the old sailor's face.

"I am afraid, sir," he continued with great earnestness, as he shook his head, "I am afraid the service is going to the dogs."

There was something pathetic in the way Tim clung

to the past. Buck saw there was no use to argue the question. Besides, he knew it was time to wash up and brush his clothes for supper formation.

"I am glad to know you, Tim, and I hope I shall be in your watch on the cruise," said Buck as he started down.

He was passing through the lubber's hole when Tim said:

"There she comes!"

"What?"

"The *Constellation*."

Buck jumped up again and looked the way Tim pointed. Far out, beyond the point at Bay Ridge, over the tree tops, Buck could just make out the upper part of the masts, the rest of the ship being hidden.

"You think it is the *Constellation*?"

"Yes; she is under tow. They will heave in sight soon." Then he added: "I think I ought to recognize that ship. She and I have been friends for over fifty years."

When Buck was gone, old Casey said, half aloud, "A sprightly lad, for these times. He looks a little like Farragut did when I first saw him, and he's outspoken the same way." He pondered a moment, calling up the images of the past. "I have it now. He makes me think of young Dewey in the steerage. Farragut liked him. He was afraid of nothing."

As Buck passed the gun deck and forward on the berth deck to the washroom, he called out:

"Fellows, the *Constellation* is coming in."

They ran over and looked out of the ports.

"You are fooling us."

When they were forming, still nothing was visible.

Pikeman remarked:

"That's one of Jones's schemes to make himself conspicuous."

When they got back from supper, the *Constellation* was halfway up the channel in tow of the *Standish* and the *Phlox*, the academy tug and side-wheeler, and the new plebes remained out on the wharf as the ship with her lofty masts came in and was made fast to the buoy in the middle of the stream below the old monitor *Passaic*.

"We shall probably go on board about the end of next week, or early in the following week," remarked Preble to the group that gathered around him, "and immediately after the first class graduates, the new first class and third class will come on board and then we will sail."

Day after day as the plebes came back from the drills and exercises that seemed to get harder and harder, they longed for the time when they would embark.

Thursday evening after supper on his way to his room when the bugle was sounding for study hour, Whaley passed by Jo-Jo's room.

"I saw our friend the carpetbagger a little while ago. He was meek as a lamb. Not a bit gally."

"Where did you see him?" asked Jo-Jo.

"Behind the gas house. He says he likes to sit there alone and look out over the bay. He is inclined to be romantic. This grind here will take the romance out of him in a little while."

"I will take it out of him," muttered Jo-Jo to himself.

Late the next afternoon, before supper formation, Buck was enjoying the harbor and bay under the setting sun from his favorite position behind the old gas house, where he was practically free from intrusion. He was absorbed in the aimless flight of some sea gulls when his

thoughts were rudely broken into. He saw a cadet coming along the sea wall.

"It is Jo-Jo," he murmured. "He is coming up the road this way. Whaley must have put him on."

"Stand up there, mister!" said Jo-Jo savagely.

Buck stood up, though he felt his chest begin to heave.

"I'll do as Preble advised, if I can," he resolved.

"What is your name?"

"Jones."

"Jones what?"

"Jones, sir."

"Let me hear you spell it."

"J-o——"

"Stop! J what?"

"J, sir, o, sir, n, sir, e, sir, s, sir; Jones, sir."

"Where are you from?"

"Alabama, sir."

"Was your father a rebel?"

"He fought in the Civil War."

"Put on 'sir' when you answer me."

Jo-Jo saw the blood mount to Buck's face, and he knew he had struck the right trail.

"I say he was a rebel, with Lee and Jackson and all the rest of them. They fought against their country. They were not only rebels, but they were infernal traitors."

Buck never knew before that moment what destroying passions lie dormant in the human breast.

"You're a liar," he cried, rushing at him, but was stopped by a staggering blow between the eyes. Buck saw stars, but he charged again. Another blow on the cheek. Jo-Jo felt he had it all his own way. The green-horn didn't even know how to take his guard.

"I'll pound him to jelly," he said to himself.

Buck advanced again, and again received a crushing blow in the left eye; then he paused as he saw the scientific boxer all prepared for the next charge. He had begun to get his "head" again. Jo-Jo then advanced cautiously and struck Buck again, this time in the right eye. Buck's awkward effort to parry amounted to nothing. The blow almost knocked him down, and when his blinking eyes could see again, Jo-Jo was advancing to deliver another blow.

"I'll stretch him out this time," resolved Jo-Jo, as he struck out with all his might.

"I must get close to him," Buck concluded, and he lowered his head. Jo-Jo's blow struck the top of his forehead and glanced, and Buck passed under his guard. As Jo-Jo drew back, Buck struck him a powerful blow under the chin. Jo-Jo staggered. Buck followed it up with another blow in the mouth, and then grappled with his old Indian hug, giving him the "hip heiss."

Jo-Jo came down with a thud, Buck on top. Buck flattened out to hold him down. Jo-Jo struggled, to no avail. Buck was in his own province here. Jo-Jo struck him on the back of the head.

"If you strike me that way again, I'll mash your face in," and Buck put his fist in his face. Jo-Jo's lips were bleeding. "I ought to do it, anyhow." But he restrained the impulse. Jo-Jo, finding he could do nothing, began to quiet down. Finally he said:

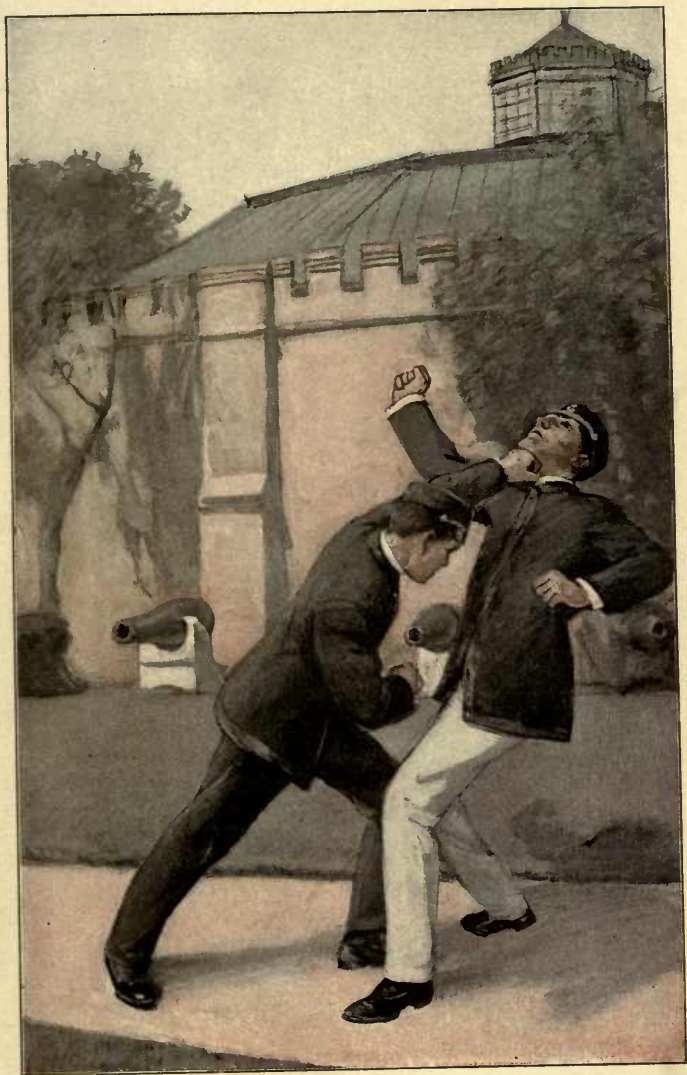
"This is a strange way to fight."

Buck saw that one of Jo-Jo's lower teeth was gone.

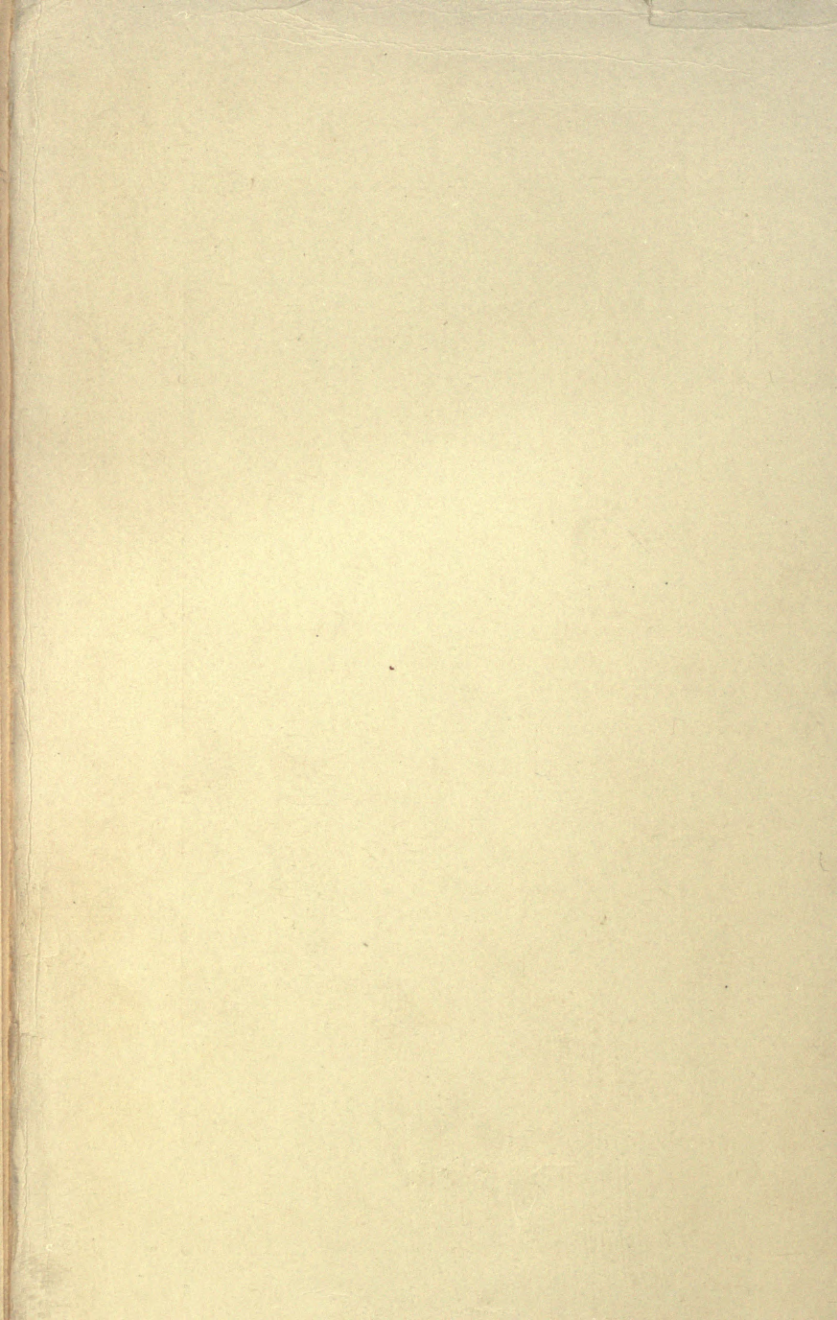
"Your way was a strange way to me."

"What are you going to do?"

"I am going to hold you here till you give up and take back your insult in calling my father and General Lee traitors."



"Buck struck him a powerful blow under the chin."



Buck's blood began to boil again at the thought. After a pause Jo-Jo began:

"It is nearly time for supper formation."

"I don't care."

Jo-Jo began to have a fear lest some one should come up and find them. The fear began to haunt him. He saw two cadets walking up the sea wall from the marine barracks.

"How about the future?" It was evident that Jo-Jo was making overtures for capitulation.

"I am going to take nothing else from you. You will have to give up for good." Buck would have nothing but unconditional surrender.

A heavy silence followed.

"I'll give up," said Jo-Jo.

"Do you take it all back?"

"Yes."

They got up. A new dread seized Jo-Jo. Buck might report him. He knew the authorities were only waiting for such a thing to dismiss him.

"Will you shake hands?" he asked.

Buck said, "Yes." They shook hands.

"It is all over now?" asked Jo-Jo.

"Yes."

Jo-Jo turned and went around the gymnasium. Buck went by the gas house.

Jo-Jo went back of the Old Quarters, then down by the steam building and physical laboratory and entered the New Quarters by the rear door. He hurried up to his room. On the stairs Whaley called out:

"What's the matter, Jo-Jo?"

"I fell down coming up the steps." Jo-Jo felt that his lips were beginning to swell, and stopped long enough to get some ice from the cooler.

"I wonder if the tooth shows?" He hurried to his room and to the looking-glass. "It looks bad. When I talk it shows. I wonder what became of that tooth. I must have swallowed it. Confound that little carpetbagger! I'll get even with him yet."

He noticed that a sort of whisking sound came from the vacant place when he talked. He crushed some ice and kept it on his lips. "It's no use," he said, as the bugle blew for supper formation.

When Buck reached the *Santee* he went forward on the spar deck to avoid the others, then down the forward hatch to the washroom and plunged his head in a basin of water.

"What are you doing, Buck?" asked Preble, as he came in to wash up.

"Cooling my head off."

When the bugle blew Buck wiped, and went to brush his hair.

"What a fright!" he exclaimed, as he saw himself in the glass. A lump had begun to grow on his forehead; dark-blue bands of puffed flesh were forming around both eyes; a large black bruise was on the cheek.

"Buck, my dear fellow, you had better go to the hospital," suggested Preble with much anxiety.

"Much obliged to you, Preble; it's all right."

At supper everybody looked at Buck, then at Jo-Jo. By study hour everybody had guessed that the first fight with the new plebes had been fought. Indignation against Jo-Jo was running high. Whaley, his chum, came up and said:

"Jo-Jo, you're a bully and a coward to fight that little fellow. I am not going to have anything more to do with you."

"Upon my word, Whaley, he struck me first. I was

only running him. He came at me without any warning. That's how he hit me in the mouth. I only kept him off in self-defense, until he found he could do nothing; then he stopped and ran away."

"Jo-Jo, you know you are lying," Whaley said, and turned on his heel. He didn't speak to Jo-Jo till after breakfast next day, when, as the plebes were coming out, Whaley edged up close to Buck, who could hardly see through the swelling about his eyes.

"Did you strike him first?"

"Yes, sir."

Then Whaley began to speak to Jo-Jo again, though he kept a lurking contempt for him.

At dinner formation the adjutant read an order for Jones, B. P., to report to the Commandant immediately after dinner. The battalion knew what that meant.

"Jo-Jo is a goner."

"The little chap ought to have reported it, anyhow."

"I'd like to hear everything he tells the Commandant."

"Jo-Jo has always tormented the little fellow."

"He never has picked trouble with anybody his own size."

"A good riddance it will be."

Such were the remarks during the meal.

When Buck saluted before the Commandant's table, Captain Carrington began:

"Mr. Jones, it is clear that you and Mr. Kerr have had a fight. Please report what led up to it."

"With your permission I'd rather not, sir."

"You realize that it was the part of a bully. Mr. Kerr has a bad influence. Your testimony with the visible facts will suffice. You will be rendering a service to the corps."

"I struck him first, sir. I'd rather not make any further statement." Buck was respectful, but firm. Car-

rington respected the way Buck felt, and again gave up the hope of catching Kerr.

When Buck left the office the hall and steps were lined with cadets. Jo-Jo stood opposite, looking pale and anxious. He raised his eyebrows as Buck came out. Buck shook his head.

"It's all right," said Jo-Jo, with a relieved look as he went to his room.

On Sunday Preble suggested that Buck get on the excused list so that he would not have to go to church looking as he did; but Buck decided to go.

When he entered the chapel he was deeply impressed by the tablets and memorial windows. It seemed to him that the spirits were gathered there of those who had nobly given their lives for others; some in shipwreck, some in accidents, some in battle, some in the ice of the Arctic, some in the fevers of the tropics. He had never been so impressed by any church service. The climax came while the cadet choir sang with wonderful expression the hymn

Hear us when we call to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea.

The Chaplain invited the members of the new class to remain after church service and join his Bible class; also issued an invitation to them to join the Y. M. C. A. at the afternoon meeting.

Buck hesitated. "I look like a scarecrow!" he thought. But he stayed.

All the next week the drills and exercises continued, getting worse and worse all the time, as the new plebes thought. Buck continued going with the swimming squad and imbibed some good points from Storm. He

began to develop a good stroke at the boat drills, and "Chaw" Bartell made him stroke oar of his cutter.

Saturday came and there was no move for embarking.

"It can't be much longer," said Preble to those who complained of the severity of the exercises. "Next week is graduation week, and we must get on board before Saturday, when the first and third classes embark."

Monday and Tuesday they continued, conscious that the other classes were rejoicing in the closing week. Finally, Wednesday morning the order was read out for the *Santee* squad to prepare their effects and be ready to embark on the *Constellation* at 2.30. They shifted into working clothes and, with clothesbags and pillowcases, emptied their lockers, and at 2.30 sharp were embarked in steam launches and transferred. They found their locker numbers and hammock hooks, and by eight bells, four o'clock, were all located on the *Constellation*. They had consecutive numbers for their lockers forward on the berth deck, odd numbers on the starboard side and even numbers on the port side; but the hammock hooks were located according to the part of the ship.

The watch quarter and station bill was already posted on the bulletin board aft on the gun deck, and all crowded around to learn their assignments and duties. Buck found that he was in the starboard watch, maintop number 371, stationed on the main royal yard; that he was number 17, the "powder monkey" at gun number 10. He began copying down his duties, when he decided he'd find Tim Casey to let him know that he was in the starboard watch.

A sailor told him that he would probably find Tim up on the forecastle with his pigeons at that time. Buck went forward on the gun deck, looking closely at everything as he passed, and was just going up the forehatch

when he heard a terrible outburst on the forecastle—oath after oath, he had never heard anything like it. He recognized Casey's voice. A landsman rushed by. Casey was after him.

"You ——— son of a sea cook! I'll jump down your throat and tear your heart out!"

Buck never dreamed a human being could get in such a rage. He drew back down to the gun deck. It was a hard shock. He had begun to idealize Tim Casey, and to himself began to make explanations: "Perhaps Tim was terribly provoked. After all, men are much the same. He is probably no worse than I was when Jo-Jo called my father and General Lee traitors." But he couldn't get adequate excuses for such language. "Maybe it all depends on a man's training." He walked up and down, not wishing to go on the forecastle at once. He asked a sailor coming down the hatch what was the matter.

"Oh, one of the new men who didn't know any better kicked Tim Casey's pigeons."

"What would Tim have done to him if he had caught him?"

"He would probably have shaken the life out of him and chucked him overboard."

After a while, when everything had been quiet for several minutes, Buck went up on the forecastle and found Tim sitting on his "ditty" box leaning over stroking two pigeons he held close with his left arm. No father, or even mother, ever fondled an offspring with more tenderness. Tim had never had a wife or any children upon whom to bestow affection, and it was for these two pigeons to call out that elemental instinct of tenderness that probably lies the deepest in all living nature, which sixty years of hard, wandering experience had not dimmed in this rough man of the sea.

"How do you do, Casey?"

"How do you do, Mr. Jones?"

"I have come to tell you that I am in your watch; the starboard watch; starboard maintop, it is."

"I am glad."

"I am glad, too." Buck stooped down and stroked the pigeons gently. This went to Tim's heart. Tim had always liked Buck. Now, and henceforward, he would have given his life for him.

"Boatswain's mate!" called the officer of the deck from the quarter-deck.

"Sir?" answered Casey.

"Pipe mess gear!"

"Ay, ay, sir," and Casey put the pigeons carefully back in their little coop and closed the door, and then went up and down the deck piping mess gear. The boatswain's mate on the gun deck took it up. Buck liked the piping of the boatswain's mate on the *Santee*, but he thought it couldn't compare with Casey's. Indeed, there was never a boatswain's mate who could equal Tim Casey. His piping had the "atmosphere," the "spirit" of the briny deep. Under the spell of the piping Buck recovered from his shock of a few minutes before and went down again on the gun, and as he passed aft he was astonished at the quick transformation. The mess cooks were getting down their tables and benches from between the beams overhead, hooking one end at the side between the guns and hinging down the metal legs at the inboard end. Some were already bringing the pots of potatoes, buckets of coffee, loaves of bread from the galley.

"It is wonderful," murmured Buck. "A few minutes ago this was the gun deck of a fighting machine; now it is a big mess hall."

He found the same preparations going on on the berth

deck, but here two long tables stretched fore and aft, one on each side, with camp stools for the cadets, and mess-hall boys served instead of enlisted men.

"Bugler, sound the supper call!" he heard the officer of the deck order, and all hands went to supper. Buck remained at supper only a very short time. He was eager to see everything that went on on the gun deck and spar deck.

When he went up he found the smoking lamp lighted and the jackies sitting around smoking their pipes and telling yarns.

"Messenger, tell the boatswain's mate to 'turn to' and pipe 'sweepers,'" directed the officer of the deck, and in a few minutes there was no sign of mess gear of any kind.

"Preble, it is wonderful to me how they manage everything," remarked Buck, as the two sat on the main topsail halyard rack talking over the events of the day. "First I saw the guns only, then the gun deck seemed like a mess hall, and then it turned back to guns again."

"After sunset you will see it turn into a big bedroom," added Preble.

"It is all systematized," added Preble, "and there is a routine for each day, and every man on board has his particular part to play. You noticed in the watch quarter station bill how the duties are specified. So many of the crew are in the forecastle, so many in the foretop, so many in the maintop, so many in the mizzentop, and so many in the afterguard. Each man has a certain part in getting up anchor, in making sail, in furling sail, in reefing topsails, in working ship, at abandon ship, at gun quarters and target practice, at boat drill and at everything else, and if each man does his part well the whole thing will go like clockwork."

"I am going to copy down all of my duties and learn them at once, and do *my* part," resolved Buck.

"Hello, let's go forward, Buck; I see the men are going in swimming."

They went forward and climbed a few ratlins up the port fore rigging to have a good vantage ground. The port topping lift was let out till the end of the boom touched the water, and the sailors in swimming trunks were walking down and diving off. Some would dive from the bulwarks; some were swimming back and forth to the boom; others were striking far out into the stream.

"Watch this man going out on the flying jib boom. That's John Anderson, captain of the maintop; the best swimmer on the ship except Tim Casey."

The jib boom must have been forty feet from the water. Buck had seen what he thought was high diving in Alabama, but nothing like this. He was uneasy as Anderson went off, but drew a breath of relief when his outstretched arms made the entry for his head as he struck and scooted under the water, rose and shook the water from his hair, and struck out overhand for a two-hundred-yard jaunt and back.

"Look at that stroke!" cried Buck in admiration, as Anderson came back with the speed of a steam launch.

"He swims like a dolphin," admitted Preble, "but he can't touch Casey. Casey usually goes off the foreyard."

Buck looked up with wild-eyed amazement at the foreyard far above.

"See that man out there making the long side stroke? That's Ol Olsen, the Swede. Casey says Olsen could buck a seaway longer than any of them."

Anderson went out on the jib boom for another dive.

"I wish the fellows in Sumter could see this," said Buck to himself. "Preble, won't they let us go in? Let's ask the officer of the deck."

"It is too late. To-morrow they will probably lower the starboard boom for the cadets."

"Tim, why don't you go in?" suddenly called out Preble, as he saw Tim pass below them.

"Fresh water swimming," said Tim in disgust as he passed on.

"I think Tim's bones are getting a little stiff. He is really getting old," said Preble.

After a while the swimmers were called in.

"Man the lower boom topping lift!" ordered the officer of the deck. "Hoist away!"

Buck and the cadets about joined with the sailors. It was the first time Buck pulled on a piece of gear. Casey piped, "Hook on the dinghy!" The dinghy had been manned and lay off a little distance during the swimming.

"Lay aft to the boat's falls! Set taut! Hoist away!"

Buck put his whole weight in the boat's falls as he lowered his head and bent over with the sailors, and all marched down the gangway stamping to keep time. It seemed to be up.

"Once more, once again," and Casey piped to haul hard.

"Belay, belay! Come up with the falls!"

Buck turned to Preble. "It's great."

Preble smiled. "You'll get enough hauling on gear before the cruise is over." But he could not check Buck's enthusiasm. He wished they might make sail that minute and start. Health and strength, physical, mental, and moral, made Buck a natural optimist and enthusiast, and the new environment was an inspiration.

The two cadets went forward and sat down with Casey on his chest, and were talking over the prospects, wondering when they would start on the cruise.

Buck heard the officer of the deck order, "Bugler,

sound the call!" At the first blast Casey and Preble jumped up and faced aft, and so did all the men about the deck. Buck quickly followed the example. The colors started down. Slowly they came. At the last note of the bugle all saluted.

Buck's heart leaped high. He realized through every tingling fiber of his being that he was "serving under the flag."

Soon, at the order from the officer of the deck, all the boatswain's mates piped together, and called out, "Stand by your hammocks!" All the enlisted men and cadets ranged themselves along the gangway outboard, next to the hammock netting, the cadets abaft.

When Buck finally turned in at 9.30 he went to sleep quickly, but not until he had thought over the day and realized that he was at last on a warship in commission, and he had undefined feelings of gratitude and resolved to do his part well.

The next morning Buck jumped up at gun fire, and was the first of the cadets to get his hammock lashed and on deck. Preble was next.

"To-day is graduation," remarked Preble. "By twelve o'clock we shall be real plebes."

As soon as breakfast was over Buck began investigating the nature of his duties as specified on the watch quarter station bill.

"Preble, where is the main royal yard?"

"See away up there, the highest yard on the mainmast."

"Would the officer of the deck let us go up there?"

"I think so. To-morrow before sunset colors, when the other classes get on board, you'll have to go up for sending down light yards, and possibly they will send us over the masthead to-day."

The permission was granted.

Buck climbed the main rigging and reached the main-top as he had done on the *Wyoming*, then he entered on the new venture of climbing the topmast rigging, and finally stood on the crosstrees holding tight to the top-gallant shrouds.

"It is very high," he murmured, and his head seemed to get dizzy as he looked down. Soon he mastered his feelings, and slowly started up the Jacob's ladder.

"It's very loose. I wonder if it is going to give way." He paused and his heart seemed to come up in his throat. "Of course it must be strong." But a tremor passed over his frame as he glanced over his shoulder at the dizzy height. He turned his eyes upward, held his teeth tight together and slowly climbed on, till at last he stood on the jack, with his left arm around the mast, his right hand holding the backstay. He felt tumult within. There was nature's strong impulse to get down and escape, and there was the resolve to conquer nature. Buck seemed to take a savage pleasure in almost torturing himself.

"I'll stand here till there is no sign of a tremor left;" and he stood.

Casey was looking at him from down on the forecastle.

"Come here, Olsen," he said to the sailor standing on the other side of the deck. "You see that cadet up there on the mainjack? He is stationed in the main royal with you. He's a new one and a friend of mine. I want you to look out for him. He is inclined to be venturesome. Keep your eye on him until he gets used to handling the sail."

CHAPTER IX

BUCK LEARNS SEAMANSHIP AND SOME OTHER THINGS

AT one o'clock Carrington and the Chaplain came on board; the boats were hoisted, the lower booms rigged in, the chain cable unshackled from the buoy, the ship being held, as she rode to the flood tide, by a slip rope through the buoy ring.

At 2.30 the *Standish* and the *Phlox* came alongside, and by 4.30 the *Constellation* dropped anchor in seven fathoms of water beyond the bar well out in the bay, Captain Carrington deciding to remain at anchor over night as the wind was a head one.

A feeling of exultation came over Buck. "All hands" were allowed to go in swimming, and when Buck struck the water and began to swim against the wind and tide, he felt that he was really making the acquaintance of the sea. It seemed to challenge him, and whenever a wave larger than the others came along he took delight in riding it, swimming on his face in the trough, then rising on his side and taking the crest with the back of his head. The first big wave he struck was followed by a second one before he was prepared and it ducked him and partly strangled him.

"The big fellows come in pairs. They won't catch me again!" and Buck swam well forward of the ship against the waves and came back with them, his face fairly beam-

ing. He thought he would go up and take a farewell dive from the bulwarks. He walked up the boom, and was nearly at the ship's side when Rutlidge started out.

"Wait till I get in," called out Buck.

"It is too late," answered Rutlidge.

"Then turn around and go back."

"I can't turn around."

"Then come on."

Buck knew that Rutlidge was an indifferent swimmer, and that he knew nothing about diving, so he decided to make way and, as Rutlidge drew near, he leaned out to let him pass. Rutlidge was rattled, and being about to lose his balance, leaned out the same way. The life line running above the boom slackened more than Buck expected. His foot slipped.

"If I hold to the line, it will throw Rutlidge off." Buck let go.

It was about a twenty-foot fall. Buck tried to kick up his heels and take the water with his hands and head. Too late! He shut his mouth tight as he struck the water square on the back of his neck and his spine. Everything turned black. His powerful heart action probably stood him in good stead.

With the dawning of semiconsciousness, he felt some one beneath him, pushing him upward. He began to realize that he was under the water and began to kick. Fierce pains darted through his head and back. He started to gasp. The brine poured into his mouth. The man beneath him worked frantically. Full consciousness came as he reached the surface, completely strangled. He spat the water out and began to strike out against the waves.

"You'd better come this way and go in over the Jacob's ladder astern." It was Casey beside him. He

saw that they had drifted abaft the gangway. Things were still blurred before Buck's eyes, and he was racked by strange pains.

"I am going in from the boom," was his determined answer, and he began to get his long side stroke and to take the waves with the back of his head.

When they reached the boom and Buck got hold, Casey said:

"I'll go around the other side and nobody will notice it." He struck out around the bow with his powerful stroke and came in over the port boom, reaching the deck almost as soon as Buck did, all the other swimmers being in and the topping lift being already manned.

"Been in swimming, Tim?" said Mike Kelly, the wag, captain of the forecastle. "I thought you didn't want any more swimming in these waters."

"I thought I'd get a taste of the brine."

"Where's your swimming trunks?"

"I thought I'd wash out my clothes."

"You must be looking up. Since when did you begin going in on the starboard side?"

"I only went in over the bow and came around to the port side."

Tim had taken off his dripping clothes to the waist and was rubbing down.

"Where's your pipe and your hat, Tim?"

This was too much. Tim had gone overboard many a time in an emergency, and had seen other seamen go over likewise, but he had never heard of a seaman going over so quick that he didn't take time to put his pipe in his hat and leave them behind.

During the swimming Tim had been sitting up on the topgallant forecastle smoking and watching Buck. It renewed his youth as he saw Buck take the waves for the

first time. He was watching when Buck came up the boom, and the instant he saw how Buck struck, he was overboard.

"Look here, Mike, you blasted Irishman!"

"What are you yourself?"

Tim made as though to take a belaying pin from the fife rail.

"Maybe Mr. Jones don't want to talk about this, and if you don't keep your Irish tongue from wagging, I'll crack your skull and feed you to the sharks the first dark night outside the Capes!"

Buck had to steady himself as he went down to the berth deck and up to the washroom to rub down and dress. He turned in as soon as hammocks were piped, but could not go to sleep on account of the dull pain in his head and back. Shortly after both watches had been piped down and the anchor watch had been mustered and everything was still, a man straightened up from beneath his hammock.

"How do you feel, Mr. Jones?" he asked in a low voice. Buck recognized Casey.

"I have a pain in my back and head, but I think it will be all right to-morrow. You are very good to come to see me, Tim."

"I have some turpentine I got from the ship's painter," began Tim.

"Turpentine is good, I know. My mother uses it on us boys," Buck said.

"Turn over, and let me rub your back."

Buck obeyed, and the old sailor rubbed his back for nearly an hour, until the heavy breathing showed that Buck was asleep; then he gently slipped away.

The next day Buck was much better, but he still felt somewhat dazed. He managed to get through gun quar-

ters and a short drill, as well as to do his part in getting up anchor and making sail. No one but Tim noticed anything.

The wind held from the southeast and they continued beating down the bay, tacking every hour or two. Late in the afternoon Tim called Olsen up.

"They are probably going to shorten sail and anchor soon. Keep a good lookout on Mr. Jones when you go up to furl the main royal. He's not very well to-day, and ought to be on the sick list. Keep him in near the bunt, and don't get out of reach of him. Never mind about the outer gaskets. I will square you with the first lieutenant if he sees them."

As Tim foresaw, about sunset, "all hands" were called to shorten sail and bring ship to anchor.

"Stand by to lay aloft, light yardmen!"

Buck was in the rigging with the rest. "Lay aloft!" and Buck was off, leaving all the cadets except a third classman on the topgallant yard. He reached the royal yard but a little behind Olsen.

"Lay out and furl away!"

"I'll not wait, but will go out on the yardarm myself this time. You stay in at the bunt," and Olsen laid out and stopped half way.

"We'll get it well up inboard first," he said; and he and Buck leaned over the yard and grabbed up fast to beat the fore royal.

"Be careful, Mr. Jones. The foot rope is short, even in here. Don't pull up so hard. You might miss and go over backwards."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when Buck made a heavy grab, as the sail bellied out, and missed. The impetus carried him backward. He grabbed at the yard; too late! His finger tips only touched. He bent

his knees to try to catch the stirrup; too late! It was out of reach.

Thoughts began to flash through his mind like lightning. It was a hundred and fifty feet to the deck.

Olsen's arm was about him at the small of the back and hurled him back against the yard. Buck drew a deep breath. It was all over in the twinkling of an eye.

"That was a good turn, Olsen!" he said, as he took up the furling again, more cautiously this time.

The *Constellation* made only about twenty-five miles that first day. It was a good day for practice work and seamanship with the constant tacking, but the wind died down toward sunset and the distance covered was a disappointment. So the Captain in his night orders directed the officer of the deck that if the wind should spring up in the night, "all hands" should be called at daybreak.

Buck felt as though he had only begun to sleep when he heard the mate of the berth deck calling:

"Turn out! Turn out! All hands on deck! Don't stop to lash your hammocks!"

He dressed by the dim light and hurried on deck to find it still dark, though day was breaking. He shivered a little as he waited for the others to get on deck and the work to begin, but he caught the spirit of the scene about him. The stars were shining overhead and a brilliant morning planet swung over the east. Thom's Point light with its flashes was just visible above the horizon to the north, and the white light of Sharp's Island shone steady across the bay. A six-masted schooner was passing near with its green headlight, the dark hull and the tall sails outlined against the sky, earlier than the *Constellation* in taking advantage of the favorable land breeze.

"Buck, have you had any coffee?" asked Preble as

he came up the hatch biting a piece of hard-tack, and found Buck looking out over the bay.

Buck hurried down. The men were assembled in groups on the gun deck, with tin cups drinking black coffee, served from big tin buckets, and the cadets were sitting about the tables on the berth deck. Buck sipped the black steaming coffee, and felt it scalding in his mouth and throat.

The boatswain's mate piped, "Turn to!" and then, "All hands up anchor!" "Clear the berth deck! Clear the berth deck!" cried the mate of the deck, a first class-man. "On deck, there, Mr. Jones!"

Buck took a last swallow and grabbed up a piece of hard-tack and ran up the fore hatch.

"Lay down on the gun deck, port watch, and bring to the chains!"

"All ready for heaving around!" cried Chaw Bartell from the forecastle.

"Heave round!" ordered the officer of the deck, and the port watch put their weight on the capstan bars. Buck looked down the hatch. The clank of the palls and the heavy rattle of the chains stirred his blood. The capstan began to turn faster. The men on the outer ends of the bars were almost in a trot. Buck couldn't stand it any longer. He slipped down the hatch, jumped in on the first bar and pushed with all his might.

"Hello, Jones, what are you doing down here? I thought you were in the starboard watch," said Ninman from the bar behind.

"So I am, but there is nothing doing up there yet. This is fine sport." No trace of the pain of the previous day was left, except a lingering twitch when he turned his neck too far, and Buck took relish in putting his whole strength out.

"Forecastle, there, how is the chain?"

"Ten fathoms at the hawse pipe, sir."

"Clear away the head sails!"

Buck ducked under the bars and went up the hatch like a shot.

"The lad is stationed on the main royal, but I bet he has gone out to help loose the jib," said one of the sailors. And so Buck had.

"I don't do more than I have to," remarked Pike-man, "and anybody that does is a bootlick."

"Put your weight on the bar, Mr. Pikeman, or I'll report you for shirking," sharply called out the first class-man in charge forward.

"The chain is up and down, sir."

"Man the jib halyards!"

"Anchor's away, sir."

"Clear away the down haul, hoist away!"

Buck grabbed the jib halyards along with the fore-castle-men and tore down the deck, pulling with all his might as they ran.

"Haul aft the starboard jib sheet!" and as the jib began to draw, the bow began to pay off, and the ship began to turn to the eastward, from where she had been riding to the ebb tide.

"Anchor's in sight, sir, clear anchor!"

"Hook the cat!"

Steadily the ship's head swung around and passed to the southward.

"Shift over the jib sheet!"

"Lay up and clear away the spanker!"

"Man the spanker outhaul!" and Buck was off to join the afterguardsmen.

"Clear away the brails, haul out!" and the spanker took the wind and the ship continued to swing.

"Man the catfall!"

Buck ran forward again.

"Set taut! Hoist away!"

"Stand by to lay aloft, light yardmen!"

Buck was the first man in the rigging.

"Keep down in the main rigging," warned the officer of the deck, as Buck was slipping up to get a better start.

"Lay aloft!"

Up they went on the fore, main, and mizzen; Buck was in the lead. He missed two or three ratlins and chafed his shins, and two men passed ahead of him through the lubber's hole.

"Stand by to lay aloft, topmen! Lay aloft!"

In the topmast rigging Buck caught up and reached the crosstrees ahead and beat Olsen up to the yard, and was out loosening the gaskets.

"Main royal yard, there!" yelled the officer of the deck through his trumpet. "Lay in till the order."

"Lay out and loose," and on all the yards in the ship they laid out together.

"Lay in and lay down from aloft!"

Buck saw so many below him in the way that he jumped on the topgallant backstay and slid down.

"Man the topsail halyards! Set taut, hoist away!"

When he was through hauling on the main topsail halyards, Buck jumped forward and helped in the last hauling on the fore-topsail halyards. Thus Buck kept on the jump from one rope to the next till all sail was set.

"Pipe down, remain on deck, starboard watch!"

The sun was just up and the ship went bowling along about eight knots an hour, with the wind abeam. An ideal start; and Buck was full of enthusiasm. When the starboard watch went below at eight bells the ship was off the mouth of the Patuxent River.

The Captain wished to make up time, so he kept the ship on its course without undertaking any seamanship maneuvers, but made up by a long drill at gun quarters from nine-thirty till eleven. Some of Buck's crew smiled at the way he jumped back and forth with the long powder pouch.

"We'll have to change the name from 'powder monkey' to 'powder rabbit,'" whispered one.

"Then it would truly be a case of a 'Buck rabbit,'" whispered the other.

"Knock off your laughing, there, and attend to your duties."

The gun captain was severe, but a smile passed over the whole crew as the joke was quietly passed along.

"Away, riflemen!" The gong sounded. Buck started, but remembered that he was a boarder.

"Away, boarders, board from the starboard bow!"

The rattle sounded. Buck dropped his pouch, drew his cutlass, rushed up the hatch, flew for the bow and arrived even before the boarders from the forward guns. He brandished his cutlass over the bulwarks, and pictured to himself that he was boarding the *Serapis* from the bow of the *Bonhomme Richard*.

"Shift breeching, sponge, load, and shift left truck! Train three points forward of the beam! Range two thousand yards! Aim!—Fire!—Sponge!—Load!" and so the drill went on for a solid hour and a half.

After securing, the retreat sounded; the plebes gathered on the spar deck around the mainmast, and along the sailing launch, and most of them stretched out on the deck apparently exhausted.

"It's great, isn't it?" remarked Buck with enthusiasm.

"I don't see anything great in going over and over

again the same thing. Carrington and Dott never know when to quit," said Pikeman.

Lieutenant Commander Dott had just been ordered to the Academy as senior assistant to the Commandant, and was the executive officer of the ship.

"Dott is an old stinker, anyhow. He would drive you till you fell dead. Say, Preble, do they work you as hard as this all through the cruise?"

"Pretty much, in one way or another."

"Then it will be as bad as it was on the *Santee*."

Buck saw there was no use to argue the matter, so he went up forward where he saw Casey and Kelly talking.

"Where are we, Casey?"

"Off the mouth of the Potomac. This land breeze is holding on longer than usual. It's going down now and there won't be much of it left by the dogwatch. But it will stiffen about sunset, and if it's in a hurry the Captain is, and he holds on all night, we can anchor off Hampton Roads for breakfast."

"Mr. Jones, do you see that point over there?" put in Kelly, as he pointed over to the northward of the mouth of the river.

"No, I can't see it."

"What do you suppose its name is?"

Buck looked carefully.

"I tell you *that's no point*."

"Right you are, Mr. Jones," said Kelly with ill-concealed merriment.

"You know, Mr. Jones, with seafaring men, everything is a point, but that point is No Point."

Buck looked at Casey for an explanation. There was a twinkle in Casey's eye.

"Mike Kelly must have his Irish fun. But Mike's

a good fellow with all that. You see, Mr. Jones, that point is so low that you can't see it any distance away, and the sailors these hundred years have called it Point No Point; and that's its name."

Buck laughed loud and long.

"That's a good one, Mike. I'm going to try it on Mr. Preble."

"You'd better try it on one of the new ones, and get Mr. Preble to stand by you."

The bugle sounded the dinner call for the starboard watch. Buck went below to find Preble, and Casey went by to look out for his pigeons.

At dinner Buck set the whole table roaring, including the upper classmen, as he caught three or four of the plebes in turn before they caught on. Casey and Kelly heard with great satisfaction what a success he had made with the joke.

"The lad has as much humor as if his name were Pat," remarked Casey.

"Or Tim," put in Kelly.

"Or Mike," retorted Casey.

"We must put him on to some more things."

Casey nodded.

In the afternoon watch it came Buck's turn at the lead. He had been watching the process of heaving, and felt that he could heave it all right, for he had used a sling at Sumter with great success, but the first time he tried, the lead came near falling on his head.

"Put more muck in it, Mr. Jones," said the "gentleman of the watch," the first classman on duty.

The next time the lead went around, but made so little distance ahead, that though the ship's speed had diminished to about four knots, Buck failed to get a sounding. He grit his teeth. "I'll put it far enough this time,"

and the lead went well out, but fell over the muzzle of the second broadside gun, and he had trouble pulling it back.

"Use your head, Mr. Jones."

Buck realized that he had to aim the lead.

"In the chains, there!" called the officer of the deck sharply.

"Sir?" answered Buck, as consternation seized him.

"What is your sounding?"

"I *must* get it this time. I'll aim well out," resolved Buck as he steadied himself.

If the officer of the deck thought he would rattle the amateur, he was mistaken. The lead went well forward and some distance out from the ship's side, farther out than a seaman would have put it, but it got bottom, with the red mark just showing at the water's edge.

"By the mark, seven," Buck called out with a note of victory in every word.

The officer of the deck looked at the gentleman of the watch and both smiled.

Buck began to get bottom nearly every time.

"By the mark, seven," he called out several times.

"It's not quite so deep this time. I wonder what I ought to call it. I'll try it carefully again." The same thing: the red rag mark was well above the water. Buck pulled it up to see the mark below, the white mark for five fathoms.

"It's about half way between the seven and the five—by the mark, six," he called out.

"What is that, sir?" demanded the officer of the deck.

Buck repeated, "By the mark, six."

"There is no such mark, sir."

Buck felt the blood rushing to his cheeks.

"Gentleman of the watch," continued the officer of the

deck in a severe tone, "teach that land lubber in the chains something about the lead line."

"Mr. Jones, when there is no mark and you estimate it an even fathom, call it 'by the deep.' If it is a fraction of a fathom, call it by the quarter, more or less."

That was all that was needed.

"By the deep, six," he called out next, and soon took pride in estimating to the half fathom and the quarter fathom.

"And a half, six—quarter less seven," and before the two hours were up he felt sure of himself.

Buck went forward when relieved, holding his head high. He got Casey talking about the lead. Casey went on to tell him about the different size leads, the limits of the hand lead, the deep-sea lead, and about the record soundings he had helped Commodore Maury and Captain Sigsbee to make, and about the queer specimens they had brought up from great depths.

Buck's enthusiasm was stirred.

"Do you think we shall use the patent deep-sea lead this cruise?" he asked.

"Yes, indeed; the first time we come in from sea and approach the land."

Mike Kelly came up at this point with a twinkle in his eye.

"Speaking of heaving the lead, I have a conundrum to ask you, Mr. Jones," and Kelly cast his eye over at Casey. "Why is it impossible for a leadsman on the *Constellation* to come up to a certain great humorist?"

Casey himself looked puzzled. "That's a new one on me." They thought awhile and finally both gave it up.

"Because the ship would run aground before he could reach Mark Twain."

"That's a good one," and Buck was off down the gangway to catch Preble.

"No, I'll wait and catch him and the others at supper."

He could hardly contain himself till the supper call, and at table it seemed there would never be an opening. It was a hard school in self-restraint. Finally Harry Billerson, who had had such a hard time at the lead the day before, remarked:

"Jones, I noticed you had a turn at the lead this afternoon, and I understand the gunner's mate was very uneasy, afraid he'd lose the tompion in the muzzle of number five and number seven guns."

"Yes," said Buck carelessly, "it *was* rather humiliating." He paused, and then continued:

"The truth is a leadsman on this deep-draft ship doesn't have a fair chance."

Everybody was looking at Buck and listening by this time, even the upper classmen.

"To illustrate, I will ask you a conundrum. Why is it impossible for a leadsman on the *Constellation* to come up to a certain great humorist?"

Preble looked up reproachfully. His eyes told Buck plainly: "I think you might have let *me* on." And Buck's eyes confessed: "I know it was mean, but I couldn't help it." The question passed up and down the deck, to both tables; the mess boys had taken it to the pantry, and had given it to the steward, and from him it reached the ship's cook, and spread over the gun deck. In a little while it had gotten into the wardroom and then actually penetrated the cabin.

"It's really so simple and easy, I'm ashamed to tell you now."

Buck was nonchalant and was getting up to go.

"Let us have it; let us have it. We must have it before you go."

Buck gave the answer and darted up the hatch to tell Casey and Kelly, but found them already in gales of laughter among the men.

"You certainly worked it fine, Mr. Jones." They hadn't enjoyed themselves so much in months.

As Casey predicted, the wind fell almost to a calm as the afternoon advanced, but about sunset it began to pick up again. There was no sign of coming to anchor; on the contrary, at sunset the officer called out:

"Rig out the running lights, station the deck look-outs!"

Buck was stationed at the starboard gangway lookout, the second half of the dogwatch from six to eight. He had just taken his post when he called out: "Light ho!"

"Where away?" called the officer of the deck in reply.

"Four points forward of the starboard stern."

"Can you make it out?"

"Flash light, sir; red and white."

Buck had caught the light of Smith Point, below the mouth of the Potomac, the instant it flashed down the bay. He was so intent watching that he missed the mer-riment that passed along the deck. The gentleman of the watch came along and told him that he should have reported it off the starboard quarter. It was Fonste, who had taken a fancy to Buck.

"You caught the light all right. That was the main thing," he said to comfort him. "Now keep a sharp lookout forward."

Not ten minutes passed before Buck sang out again: "Light ho!"

"Where away?"

"Broad off the starboard bow."

"Make it out?"

"Fixed white light."

"Orderly," Buck heard the officer of the deck call out, "report to the Captain and the navigator that we have picked up the light off the great Wicomico River, bearing broad off the starboard bow."

"Ay, ay, sir."

The orderly was off and soon returned.

"The Captain says very well, sir. Remain on your course. The navigator requests to be notified when the light bears abeam."

A few minutes later Buck sang out again:

"Light ho!"

"Where away?"

"Three points off the port bow."

"Make it out?"

"Fixed white light, sir."

"Orderly, report to the Captain and the navigator that we have picked up Tangier Island light, three points off the port bow."

Then the officer of the deck called through his trumpet:

"Keep a bright lookout ahead!"

The lookouts promptly responded in turn.

"Starboard cathead, bright light. Port cathead, bright light. Starboard gangway. Port gangway. Starboard quarter. Port quarter."

"Gentleman of the watch, find out why the other lookouts failed to report the lights just picked up."

Fonste went off and returned.

"The lookouts seem to be all right, sir. They say the starboard gangway lookout took the words out of their mouths."

"Who has the starboard gangway?"

"Jones, B. P."

The starboard watch turned in promptly after being relieved at eight bells, knowing that they would be called at midnight. Buck was asleep the minute he was in his hammock. It seemed an untimely awakening when he suddenly heard the mate of the deck fairly yelling:

“Turn out! Turn out! On deck, starboard watch!”

Buck was dressed and off.

“You’d better take your overcoat. You have time to get it,” advised Preble, and Buck followed his advice, getting up on deck before the bell struck, and in ample time to answer his name at the muster as the gentleman of the watch with masked lantern went about mustering the “parts of the ship.”

“Lay aft the life boat’s crew of the watch to muster!” piped Casey.

Buck began to get a little cold, so he put on his overcoat. It was a brilliant, starlit night, and the lights from several lighthouses were in view. The scene was one to inspire an imagination like Buck’s, but he rubbed his eyes. They felt heavy.

“Casey, do you know what lights those are?”

“We are off Mobjack Bay, it seems to me. Yes, those lights ahead are the York River lights. That red one is York Spit light. The French fleet anchored up there. I knew an old sailor who had been on board the flagship at the time. He told me how Washington threw a heaving line out to the French Admiral, and between them they got a timber hitch around the British army and hauled them in.”

“Oh, I know,” said Buck. “It was the battle of Yorktown, where Cornwallis surrendered.” The thought stirred him up, but in vain. He soon began to nod.

“Mr. Jones, I think you had better go to sleep. You have no lookout, and the sails probably won’t be touched

during the watch. Suppose you lie down on the deck, under the hose rack, at the bulwarks."

Casey laid out the coil of clewline for a pillow and stretched a tarpaulin over Buck as he lay down.

"Now, call me, if anything is doing."

"I'll call you."

"You promise me?"

"I promise."

Buck was very sleepy, but he wouldn't take any chances of missing anything.

Suddenly he was roused by somebody shaking him.

"Fire quarters! Fire in the forehold!" It was Casey. The bell began to strike violently, ding, ding, ding, ding—in swift succession, then, ding, ding, slowly—then ding, ding, ding, ding—ding—ding.

"My duty is with this hose."

Buck remembered with a flash. He had the hose down in an instant, the coupling end clear, and the nozzle end laid out, when Anderson, captain of the maintop, arrived.

"You couple up, Anderson, and I'll manage the nozzle and get it in place before you can start the pump," and Buck was off forward dragging the hose down the fore hatch into the forehold. There was a light. "That's the fire." As he arrived Buck turned the nozzle toward the fixed lamplight. "I won't turn it on the lamp just yet. It seems all right."

"Rig the pump—and we'll get our stream first. The hose and nozzle are gone forward already," directed Anderson on deck as his men arrived.

"Perhaps it is smoldering in there," thought Buck in the hold as the water came and he turned the hose among the barrels. "I'd better try it over there," and he turned it over to the shelves. Out jumped the Jack o' the Dust, dripping.

"What is it? What is it?" he asked in wild amazement.

"Fire in the forehold," answered Buck. "I don't know exactly where, but I'll get it," and he turned the hose to the other side. "It may be smoldering among those goods," and he turned it into the storeroom. "They say a fire aboard ship is a terrible thing. But I won't let it get a start," and Buck drenched every nook with the stream.

The Jack o' the Dust was frantic and rushed off to the first lieutenant. He had long since formed the habit of laying all his woes before the first lieutenant. He came up dripping and panting.

"A cadet is flooding the forehold, sir. He's covered the gear and spoiled the dry provisions. I saw the tops fly off of the newly opened barrels of flour. Half the hard-tack must be ruined by now."

"Go and tell him to turn the hose out of a berth deck air port."

When the Jack o' the Dust brought the order, Buck said to himself:

"Yes, I think that the forehold is now safe," and he began taking the hose up the hatch and out to the side of the berth deck, and in doing so, flooded a half dozen hammocks, chiefly of first classmen and third classmen, many of whom had not been awakened by the alarm. The first one jumped up when the cold water struck him and wiping his terrified face asked if the ship were sinking.

"No, sir; only a fire in the forehold. I think the danger is over now," answered Buck as he flooded a half dozen lockers of third classmen in getting the nozzle out of the air port.

"Secure, secure," was piped, and the water stopped, and Buck drew in the nozzle and started up the hatch.

Just in time! The flooded upper classmen began to realize what had happened. Buck had never heard such language from "gentlemen." Some of them swore who had never sworn before. Buck dragged the hose aft, feeling that pride and zest of having accomplished something unaided.

"We got the first stream, Mr. Jones," said Anderson with pride as Buck came up.

"Yes," answered Buck; "ours was the only stream there. I hated to wet so many things, but the safety of the ship had to be considered first." Buck shook his head in the self-complacent thought that he had spared nothing in the great cause.

Anderson dropped his work of unrigging the pump and stood up in amazement. All the other maintopmen did the same.

"What! Mr. Jones, do you mean to say that all that water went into the forehold?"

"Yes, indeed," said Buck, "and in the storerooms alongside. That's where the fire was reported."

He noticed the amazement on all faces, and added with a tone of half defiance, "Casey himself told me so."

"May the Lord have mercy on us when the first lieutenant finds it out, as he must," and Anderson gasped at the thought.

"He already knows about it," answered Buck. "That crazy man down there jumped up and ran like a March hare and told him about it."

"The Jack o' the Dust," said a dozen voices.

The solemnity and tragedy of the situation gave way to peals of laughter. Even Anderson broke out laughing.

"I'd have given a month's pay to see him. I'm going down to see him now."

Buck slipped off forward to confer with Casey. As he

passed the fore hatch he heard a tumult of voices—an indignation meeting.

“Every stitch I’ve got is drenched.”

“My mattress is soaked.”

“I’ll not have a collar or a cuff to go ashore in.”

“The young idiot might have known it was Friday night, the night for fire quarters.”

“Such nerve! Not the slightest concern when his stream struck me full in the face and filled my hammock.”

“He’s getting entirely too fresh. He’s picked up a few things on the forecastle, and he rushes ahead as though he knew it all. I’ll bring him to his senses.”

Buck recognized the last voice as that of Stratford.

As he went on to the forecastle, he stopped, for in the starlight he recognized Kelly convulsed with laughter. First he’d stand up and begin to tell Casey about it; then he’d become overpowered and bend over double, and then rise and try again.

“I’ve just been down there, Casey, and such a sight! It’s worth my thirty years at sea. I saw hard-tack floating around and flour barrels and salthorse and small stores.” Kelly broke down again and held both his sides to keep them from bursting. “The Jack o’ the Dust is dancing a jig,” he continued, as soon as he could get his breath. “The ship’s yeoman is there, paralyzed, and the Paymaster’s yeoman. They are all waiting in suspense for the first lieutenant to come.”

“I bet he doesn’t come,” put in Casey. “I know Dott; have known him since he was a cadet; went with him on his first cruise. He’s conscientious about government property, but he’s got enough sense to understand.”

At that point the officer of the deck called out: “Boat-swain’s mate, call one hand from each part of the ship to man the bilge pump!”

As Casey piped the call, Buck slipped away and decided to spend the balance of the watch back at the after-guard, as far away from the scene as possible, to think it all out.

Casey was right about the first lieutenant. At that moment Dott was in the wardroom among the officers, all convulsed with laughter. The Jack o' the Dust had just left after reporting the extent of the damage. As he went on in a tragic voice and wild manner, one officer after another had turned out and they all stood around in their pyjamas enjoying the scene.

Dott went up to report the matter to the Captain.

"I regret to report, sir, that two or three thousand dollars' worth of damage has been done to government stores during fire drill. At five bells I sounded the alarm for fire in the forehold. One of the new cadets thinking it was a real fire carried a hose down and flooded everything before anyone knew about it. It is most regrettable, but was unavoidable, and was due to the young man's quickness and efficiency. They say he was down with the hose before the alarm had ceased. A real fire would have been extinguished before it could have spread to the hatch or approached the forward magazine. It is the forehold that I am really afraid of in case of fire. If you approve, sir, I will call a board of survey in the morning, and condemn the articles as injured in unavoidable accident."

"I agree with you, Mr. Dott. But what is the cadet's name?" the Captain asked as Dott was leaving.

"It was Jones, B. P."

Carrington smiled a long smile when Dott was gone.

"Buck Jones again," he said to himself. "He'll make a great officer, if he doesn't get his neck broken beforehand."

Buck was sitting near the taffrail, doubled up in the

coil of the spanker sheet, leaning on his elbow, trying to think it all out.

"How could I tell it wasn't a real fire at this time of the night? I didn't think about its being Friday."

He heard the bilge pump working and the gurgle of the water as it went overboard with each stroke.

Harry Billerson pretended to be passing by.

"Hello, Jones! I thought you usually held out on the forecastle. You are back here now, I suppose, listening to the music of the bilge water. I hear you have a personal interest in that water going over the side."

Buck made no reply.

"Billerson scores this time, sure, but I'll get my inning."

Buck went all over the facts again, and definitely concluded: "It's not my fault. I tried to do my part. It's bad, but I'll not worry any more." He got up and began to take an interest in the lights. The lookouts had recently reported the Thimble Shoal light and the lights of the Capes. Buck turned and in the dim light recognized Dott, evidently looking for some one.

"He's after me." Buck braced himself and resolved to stand his ground and say nothing, come what may.

"Mr. Jones, I've come to compliment you upon your alertness and efficiency in the fire drill. You deserve great credit. The Captain agrees with me."

"You are very kind, sir, and thoughtful."

As Dott left, Buck meditated.

"He thought I'd be worrying. He didn't wait till morning. They call Dott a 'stinker'," he continued, "but I know he's a fine man. I'll keep on thinking so; I don't care how many demerits he gives me."

CHAPTER X

BUCK GETS HIS FIRST TASTE OF THE SEA

WHEN his watch was relieved, Buck went down the after hatch to his hammock and fell asleep instantly. He had not heard the noise when the anchor was let go in the morning watch, nor had he heard the noise of hoisting the damaged things out of the forehold. When he reached the deck with his hammock he saw they had reached Fortress Monroe. There was the fort, the first he had ever seen, bristling with guns. In imagination he pictured the ship engaging it. They would certainly have the advantage, he thought.

He saw Casey busy with boat gear.

"You think we shall go to sea soon?" he asked the old man.

"Probably before noon, if the captain wishes to get out on this land breeze."

"Won't they let us go ashore?"

Casey saw the look of disappointment, and said:

"You'll probably have plenty of time to see the fort when we come back in August."

"That's the old Hygeia Hotel," Casey went on, "and that's the Rip Raps. And over across there is where the English settlers first landed when they settled at Jamestown."

Buck was thrilled, but he had to hurry down to wash up in time for breakfast. He was among the last in the

washroom and he noticed Stratford still there, evidently waiting for something. Buck had finished brushing his teeth and was starting to leave.

"Mr. Jones," said Stratford sternly, "I wish to see you in the washroom after breakfast."

"Very well, sir, I'll be here."

As he went on to breakfast he wondered what Stratford wanted.

"He's too small for me to fight," he repeated to himself.

At the breakfast table the talk was all about going ashore in the afternoon. Buck said nothing. One of the first classmen came down from the deck late and reported that the *Phlox* had been sighted coming down the bay. All was excitement.

"She has mail," a number exclaimed.

"She has fresh provisions and ice," another said.

"She has laundry. Now I can get fresh clothes to go ashore in," said a third classman, as he frowned significantly at Buck.

They began to cut their meal short and hurry on deck to get a sight of the side-wheeler, the glad messenger from the Academy.

Buck looked longingly at the others as they went up the hatch, and he went into the washroom. Stratford came in in a moment.

"Mr. Jones, it seems to me that you have become confoundedly gally of late."

Buck made no reply.

"You rush ahead as though you owned the ship, and knew it all."

Buck still remained silent.

"I'll test him," said Stratford to himself.

"What is the color of this beam, Mr. Jones?"

"It is white, sir."

"I say it is *black*. Now what color is it?"

"White, sir."

Stratford stamped his foot in rage.

"Don't you know that when an upper classman says a thing is so, it makes it so for a plebe. I tell you that beam is black. Now what color is it?"

Buck did not wish to be gally, but Stratford had struck the wrong test for him. He spoke respectfully, but firmly.

"It is still white, sir."

"Do you want to fight to make it black?"

"No, Mr. Stratford, I don't care to fight; besides, after the fight, it would still be white."

Stratford was furious, but Buck was unperturbed.

"Stand on your head there."

Buck was good at standing on his head. He had known how to do it since very young when the circus had once passed through Sumter. He obeyed willingly, putting his watch cap under his head to cushion the hard deck. In a little while Stratford said:

"That will do," and Buck stood up again. "Now what color is the beam?"

"It is still white, sir."

"On your head again."

Buck obeyed. He remained what seemed a long time. He had begun to question whether it was right to obey any longer, as he felt the blood coming to his head. Fortunately at that juncture Stratford said:

"That will do."

Buck stood up red in the face.

"Now what is the color?"

"It is still white, sir."

Buck spoke with more emphasis this time. Stratford's exasperation rose.

"Take a bite of this soap."

Buck wondered whether he ought to obey. He looked at the soap. People use various cleansing preparations on their teeth. Maybe it's all right. He took a bite but spit it out with a grimace, and rushed to the scuttlebutt to rinse his mouth.

"What is the color now?"

"It is still white."

"Take another bite."

"I will not, sir. The stuff must be poisonous."

Stratford did not insist. He was a very decent fellow at heart, but his wrath about the color of the beam only rose higher.

"Look in locker 15, and bring that hammock lashing."

Buck obeyed. As he got out the lashing he found it wet, and everything else in the locker was wet. He felt very guilty. When he got back to the washroom Stratford ordered:

"Take one end and put a timber hitch and half turn around that stanchion."

Buck obeyed.

"How did you learn to pass a timber hitch and half turn? I'll swear you'll think more than ever that you know everything."

"Casey showed me, sir."

"Now take the other end and haul away."

Buck began to haul.

"Put your whole weight on it."

Buck straightened his back and hauled with all his might.

"Keep at it."

The rope didn't budge.

"What is the color now?"

"It is still white, sir."

"Pull away. Don't you shirk there."

At this juncture they heard the *Phlox* whistle to salute the *Constellation*. Everybody was on deck. Buck looked at Stratford.

"You needn't look at me. You'll haul there till you learn what the color is."

They heard exchanges of question and answer between the ship and the *Phlox*. Stratford couldn't stand it any longer.

"I'm going on deck, but I order you to remain and haul till I return. Mind you, don't you shirk while I am gone."

It was a hard test. Buck heard the shouts of those on deck. Later he heard the mail being distributed, and heard his own name called out twice. He saw through the lattice the happy cadets going off to corners to read their letters by themselves. He felt his hands getting sore. The strands of the manila rope were pressing into the flesh. He compressed his jaws and pulled away.

In his exuberance at getting his laundry and mail Stratford had forgotten about Buck. Suddenly he remembered. His conscience hurt him.

"I wonder if he has been fool enough to remain there all this time." He hurried to the washroom to find Buck still pulling away.

"What is the color now, Mr. Jones?"

"It is still white, sir," answered Buck between his teeth.

The happiness from the arrival of the *Phlox* and the reading of letters from home must have softened Stratford, or must have brought him back to his normal state, for he said:

"That will do, Mr. Jones. Unbend the lashing."

Buck was loosing the half turn when Stratford said, speaking slowly, with visible effort:

"I have come to the conclusion, Mr. Jones, that you were right after all about the color of the beam. In fact, I think I have been pretty mean."

"Not at all, sir. I realize how you felt," answered Buck, and then he added slowly: "Mr. Stratford, I am very sorry that I wet your things."

"I understand perfectly how it came about. It's only a trifle. After quarters I'll send them up on the fore-castle to dry."

They left the washroom together, the best of friends.

Buck was delightedly absorbed in his letters. There were two from his mother, one from his father, one from Hugh, and several from his friends. He was just reading his mother's letters over a second time when the mate of the deck called out at the top of his lungs: "Hear, there! The mail will go ashore in thirty minutes." Consternation spread over the deck.

"That means we are going to sea at once," said a dozen cadets, as they hurried to get writing materials, crestfallen at the idea of not getting ashore.

"It's a shame," grumbled Pikeman.

Buck dashed off a letter to his mother:

"Word has suddenly been passed that the mail closes in a few minutes. We put to sea at once. The letters were great. You can't imagine what it means to get letters after you have been out on a ship. Please write more yourself and tell everybody to write. My friend Casey thinks we shall put in around Martha's Vineyard for target practice, and then go to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, but the safest thing is to direct letters to the Academy and they will be forwarded. Tell papa it is great. They work

us hard, but they are square. The officers are all right, and the upper classmen are all right."

Buck brought his letter to a close and handed it to the mail orderly just as he was going over the side.

"All hands, up anchor!"

In thirty minutes the *Phlox* had shoved off, the anchor was up, and the ship was standing out with the breeze on the quarter. She passed the Capes about noon on schedule time, and was well outside when the land breeze died out about three o'clock.

Everything was activity on the *Constellation* as she stood out, getting ready for sea. Buck had just come on deck after helping his crew secure their gun for sea. The bay was calm as he gazed out at the Capes on the starboard bow, when apparently without cause the ship began to roll, a long slow roll to port, then a long slow roll to starboard.

"What's the matter with the ship, Casey?" he asked in astonishment. "She hasn't done this way before."

"It's nothing but the sea swell, that's come ahead through the Capes to say 'Howdy do' and welcome us in advance."

Buck looked over the side and saw long wave forms come up and pass under the ship from the direction of the Capes, though the breeze was blowing in almost the opposite direction. The ship had scorned the waves raised in the bay, though to Buck they seemed boisterous enough at times.

"But she bows when she's approaching the great sea," Buck murmured as the ship rolled again.

"The swell seems a little long," remarked Casey. "Maybe something is going on out around the Gulf Stream."

Upon inquiry from Buck, he explained how a heavy swell sometimes goes far ahead of a storm.

"No one can tell just why, but I have seen it a hundred times. Maybe the air presses down harder."

"How wonderful!" thought Buck, as he turned from looking at the tall lighthouse and white sands of Cape Henry, and gazed with a far-away look upon the limitless, mysterious ocean horizon beyond. He looked closely at the lightship, as Casey explained its advantage and use where a lighthouse would be impossible. But Buck's thoughts continually turned to the sea. It seemed to cast a hypnotic spell over him. He had thought about it and dreamed about it, and had resolved to cast his lot upon it. There it was. In imagination he pictured the vast stretch of the Atlantic to the eastward with Europe and Africa beyond, and to the southward where it circles the continents and joins with the other oceans to wrap up all the land surface of the earth. In vague outline he saw the nations meeting, and he pictured the heroic rôle that he felt America is to play. He was still dreaming when eight bells struck. His watch went below, but he remained on deck. The wind had fallen almost to a calm, and the sails were flapping idly back and forth as the ship rolled with the ground swell. Buck looked puzzled and rather disappointed.

"Casey, it doesn't look blue to me. It's green."

"Don't worry, Mr. Jones; the sea won't show its real color to the land. We are still on soundings. Wait till we get out where the depth runs to thousands of fathoms; you'll find it blue, all right."

Buck was much relieved and was impatient to push on.

"Do you think it will be calm very long?" he asked anxiously.

Casey suppressed a smile.

"I'm thinking the wind will come soon enough for most of the new cadets." He looked out toward the north-east and then toward the west. "That land breeze held too long. See those clouds shredded out up there?" Casey pointed. "That comes from wind, and I can see already we're going to have a windy sunset. I'll go and take a look at the glass."

"May I go with you?" Buck asked eagerly, and they went aft together and down on the gun deck to the barometer. Casey looked at it closely and showed Buck how to read it.

"Twenty-nine eighty-four now. It was twenty-nine ninety at eight bells this morning. It is falling, Mr. Jones. A nor'easter is running far out at sea. The outskirts may reach us at any time. I think the Captain will stand out on the port tack to gain sea room. As we get out we'll get more of the gale."

Buck was all excitement. "Do you mean a storm? Are we going to have a storm?"

Casey nodded.

A few minutes before Buck's watch was piped to supper, Casey pointed out toward the horizon to the north-east:

"There it comes, Mr. Jones."

Buck saw the glassy surface darkened with ripples. A gentle breeze came up. The sails filled and the ship stood straight out to sea on the port tack.

Buck hurried through his supper and came on deck, to be disappointed in finding still only a gentle breeze. But the sunset was weird and unnatural.

Hammocks were piped as the sun disappeared. All hands uncovered and the Chaplain offered up thanks. Buck had never felt so close to nature and to nature's God. The sky had a strange, brassy brightness, and frag-

mentary low clouds began to scud overhead, while the high clouds still moved in the opposite direction. The land had disappeared and the horizon drew its circle complete. The ship seemed to sigh in a monotone as it rolled to the long sea swell. All heads were bowed in silence. The only sound made by man was the Chaplain's voice, as he besought the guidance and protection of the Almighty during the perils of the night.

"The sea is Thine," he went on. "Thou hast given it its bounds. And we are Thine, and we seek to do Thy will, and fulfill well our part of Thy great purposes upon the earth."

Strange depths were stirred in Buck's heart, a conception of things primordial.

When he came on deck for the evening watch he found Casey and Kelly spinning yarns on the forecastle. Kelly was just telling how in the previous cruise he had played a joke on a green landsman from the West who had just enlisted:

"A gale was coming up, like it is now, only faster, and the landsman seemed much perturbed. I asked him in a friendly way if he had found his sea legs. He announced eagerly, 'No, tell me where they are stored.' I liked the lad, but for my life I couldn't resist the temptation, and I had him looking all over the ship. Finally I sent him to the master-at-arms, and they had a fight over his sea legs."

Buck thought it a great joke. Then an inspiration came over him. "Billerson is my man. I'll get even with him for last night." Buck racked his brains working out the details.

He lounged around the afterguard, Billerson's part of the ship, and began telling him what Casey had said about a gale approaching. Billerson was very eager and

showed signs of uneasiness. Buck went on to tell about the land breeze, the windy sunset, the falling barometer. At this juncture the light sails were taken in. When Buck got down from furling the main royal he went back and began to work on Billerson's feelings again.

"The ship is stanch, I think, and we have good officers, but there is one thing that worries me. I haven't got my sea legs yet."

Buck spoke solemnly and never cracked a smile.

"Nor have I," said Billerson as his uneasiness grew.

At that juncture a pair of unusually large waves passed, and the ship rolled so that Buck and Billerson had to seize the afterguard skylight on which they were sitting.

"I wonder where the sea legs are stored?" asked Billerson with determination.

"I doubt whether they have been distributed yet. You might look for yours in the afterguard chest."

Billerson went across the deck to the chest and pulled out everything.

"They are not here."

"Suppose you look in the mizzentop chest."

Billerson climbed up to the mizzentop, only to be disappointed.

"They are not there, either."

"This is bad," said Buck thoughtfully. "They probably are still below. Let's go down and find them. But I'm liable to be put on lookout at four bells. I'd better not go. Suppose you go on. Look through the forehold and ask the Jack o' the Dust."

Billerson was off.

"O Billerson!" called Buck, "you'd better get permission from the officer of the deck."

Billerson heeded. He went up and saluted the officer

of the deck. "May I have permission to go below for a few minutes?"

"Is the matter important?"

"*Very* important, sir."

"Very well."

Billerson went down, got a candle on the berth deck, went down into the forehold and looked high and low. He worked away, turning the gear over, but saw nothing that looked as though they might be sea legs. The Jack o' the Dust became very uneasy as he watched Billerson in his search. Since Buck's appearance with the hose the sight of a cadet in the forehold filled him with terror. Finally he could restrain himself no longer.

"What are you looking for, sir?" he asked.

"I'm looking for the sea legs. Are they stored down here?"

"*No*, sir. They are *not* stored down here, and I hope you won't mix up any more of the gear."

Billerson left, discussing to himself whether he would report the Jack o' the Dust for insolence. The Jack o' the Dust, as he looked over the gear all mixed up, finally decided to report the matter to the first lieutenant.

"He's probably turned in, but I'll report it all the same. These cadets will be the death o' me."

He went up and knocked on the stateroom door. Dott was asleep, but finally roused up.

"What is it?" he demanded savagely.

The Jack o' the Dust began to tremble and regret that he hadn't waited till next day.

"One of the midshipmen has been in the forehold mixing up all the gear."

"What was he after?"

"Looking for sea legs, sir."

Dott was furious.

"What do you mean by waking me up at this time of the night? Go back and don't you ever come to me again for such nonsense."

After leaving the forehold Billerson was much discouraged and went back to the afterguard to confer with Buck.

"I can't find them anywhere."

"I don't know what we can do," said Buck, as he put his hand on his forehead as in deep meditation. Finally he raised his head.

"I'll tell you," he said, as if an inspiration had come. "The master-at-arms may know where they are. I think he swings up forward on the gun deck. It's a great nuisance, but the sea is evidently rising all the time. Perhaps you had better go down and ask him about them. Don't let him put you off. You know they call him Jimmy Legs. He looks out for sea legs."

Billerson asked for permission to go below.

"You've just *been* below, sir," said the officer of the deck, in refusal.

Billerson persisted.

"It's very important, sir."

The pleading in his voice won. Permission was granted. He went forward and asked Kelly if he knew which was the hammock of the master-at-arms.

"Down there on the port side, outboard." And Billerson went down.

Kelly hurried over and nudged Casey.

"Come up to the forecastle hatch. I think we'll have some fun." They stood at the hatch and listened.

"Is this the master-at-arms?" they heard.

"No, this is *not* the master-at-arms."

A moment later the same question:

"Is this the master-at-arms?"

"No, I'm *not* Jimmy Legs."

A little later the same thing.

"No, I am not, and who in thunder are you, waking me up this way?"

Finally, after rousing a half dozen others, Billerson found the master-at-arms.

"Yes, I'm the master-at-arms. What do you want?"

"I want to get my sea legs."

Kelly nudged Casey.

"It's our friend, Mr. Jones's doing, I'll bet this pipe."

The master-at-arms lost his temper at once.

"*Your sea legs!* I have nothing to do with sea legs."

"You needn't try to put me off like that. Your very name is Jimmy Legs."

Kelly slipped down the hatch to be at hand to rescue Billerson if necessary, and the men that had been roused rose in their hammocks.

The master-at-arms was really a good man and usually exercised self-control, but the term of reproach "Jimmy Legs" was the one thing that he could not stand. He jumped out of his hammock in a rage, and would have struck Billerson, but recognized that he was a cadet.

"I'll report you to the first lieutenant."

"And *I'll* report *you*," said Billerson.

The two stood glaring at each other in defiance. The master-at-arms went off without taking time to dress and knocked on the door of the first lieutenant's cabin.

"What is it?" asked Dott sharply.

"I wish to report Mr. Billerson."

"What for?"

"For calling me 'Jimmy Legs.'" This seemed an inadequate reason, and he added: "He's been up forward and turned me out to look for his sea legs."

The master-at-arms was always close to the first lieu-

tenant. It was his compensation for being hated by the men for his office of executing the orders for punishment. But Dott's patience was sorely tried.

"I'm surprised at you, Phillips. The idea of your coming to me in the middle of the night with such a complaint!"

Phillips went forward, utterly humiliated. Kelly had slipped back up the ladder when the crisis was over, and as Billerson came up he asked:

"Mr. Billerson, did you find him?"

"Yes, but to no effect." And Billerson went aft to report another fruitless effort to Buck.

"People are very crabbed when you wake them up," he remarked.

Buck never smiled once.

"It's a shame. I know the sea has risen since you left. Did you notice the flock of sea gulls stop following in our wake before sundown? They realized that a storm was raging at sea."

Silence followed.

"Billerson, I know how we *could* find out about the sea legs. The first lieutenant has to know where everything on the ship is stored. He could tell us."

Another silence.

"If I only weren't liable to be put on the lookout!"

Another pause.

"*I'll go*," said Billerson, with the resolution of a hero sounding in his voice.

As Billerson started down the hatch Kelly came up.

"I understand you and Mr. Billerson are trying to find your sea legs."

"He's gone down to see the first lieutenant. Come over to the hatch and listen."

"I'll go and get Casey."

The three listened as Billerson rapped hesitatingly on the door. Finally they heard Dott ask impatiently:

"Who is it?"

"Cadet Billerson."

"What do you want, Mr. Billerson?"

"Please, sir, will you tell me where to find my sea legs?"

They heard Dott jump up and open the door. He was a terrible-looking man to cadets even when dressed conventionally. Terror struck to Billerson's soul as Dott appeared in his pyjamas, hair disheveled.

"*Mr. Billerson*, what do you mean, sir?"

Billerson wished that he might sink through the deck.

"Nothing, sir."

"What on earth possesses you to come to me at this time of the night on such an errand? This is the third time I have been disturbed in the last half hour about 'sea legs.'"

"I didn't mean any harm, sir," Billerson began innocently, "only the storm is coming up, and I am very anxious to find my sea legs in time."

"Who sent you to look for your sea legs?"

"Mr. Jones. He wants his also, and I will take them to him, as he is liable to be put on lookout and can't come down himself."

Dott could barely control his laughter, but he said solemnly:

"Mr. Billerson, there are no such things as sea legs. Your own legs are your sea legs."

Billerson was dumfounded. The blood began to rush to his cheeks.

"Do you think Mr. Jones knows about it?"

"I have no doubt, and I have these directions: You thrash Mr. Jones once for me, once for the master-at-arms,

once for the Jack o' the Dust, and as many times as you wish for yourself."

"I'll do it, sir."

Billerson clenched his fists and started for the ladder as Buck and Kelly and Casey slipped forward splitting their sides with laughter. When Billerson went aft Buck was not on the afterguard chest. There was no further doubt. He began peering into people's faces in the dark.

The three culprits saw him as he came up the gangway, looking.

"Mr. Jones, it will never do for him to find you now," said Kelly with uneasiness. "Slip under the topgallant forecandle."

Buck obeyed. Billerson came up.

"Casey, have you seen Mr. Jones around here?"

His voice quivered with rage in spite of his effort at concealment.

"He was up here some time ago."

"I saw him aft a few minutes ago," put in Kelly, as Billerson passed on in his search.

Buck saw Billerson first at the breakfast table next morning. Without cracking a smile, he said solemnly:

"Billerson, have you found your sea legs yet?"

Billerson's anger began to rise again.

Buck continued:

"I rather think that *your* sea legs were pumped overboard with *my* water night before last."

A smile began to play around Billerson's mouth.

"Yes, I think they were."

The two cadets became better friends than ever. Whenever Billerson would tell how Buck Jones put out the fire in the forehold, Buck would tell how Harry Billerson found his sea legs.

When Buck went on deck after general inspection,

the ship still carried all plain sail and seemed to plow through the water. Both sea and wind continued rising. The pitching became heavier though the rolling was not as heavy as might be expected, so much sail kept her heeled to starboard, but it steadied her. Now and then the bow would break the top of a wave and send the spray flying on the forecastle.

"Lay down on the gun deck, port watch of the after-guard, and rig church!" piped the boatswain's mate. The little altar was secured to a ring bolt amidship, just forward of the cabin bulkhead. The little organ was wheeled out and lashed securely to the stanchion abaft the ward-room hatch. The mess benches were taken down and rigged athwartship for the men, chairs were brought out on the starboard side for the officers, and camp stools on the port side for the cadets. Prayer books and hymnals were distributed and a big Bible placed on the altar. The bell began to strike slowly.

"What does that mean, Anderson?" Buck inquired of the captain of the maintop.

"That's the call to divine service."

Buck saw the chief quartermaster hoisting to the weather mizzen yardarm the church pennant, and as it broke loose at the yardarm and streamed out in the wind he saw a flag with a large blue cross on a white background.

"It is very beautiful," he thought, as he watched the quartermaster bend on the ensign. The Nation's flag began to go up slowly, very slowly. Buck held his breath, as he saw it stop reverently just beneath the church pennant, the glorious flag flying there proudly, but looking up in humility to the flag of the blue cross above.

Casey had been watching Buck. In fact, he always watched Buck.

As Buck went forward and started down the hatch, he asked:

“Are you coming down to church, Casey?”

“Not to-day, Mr. Jones.”

Casey hadn't been to church for twenty years, but his heart followed Buck, and he couldn't wait so long without getting a sight of him, so he went down on the gun deck and sat on the chain bitt where he could see Buck. From there he watched him all through the service.

“I like the lad's religion,” he said to himself. “Whatever it may be, it's not cowardly. He holds his head up and looks straight out. Even when bowed in prayer his eyes are still open.”

To Buck it was a wonderful service, hymns, prayers, sermon. At times the ship would heel so much that the cadets had to hold their camp stools to keep from sliding to starboard. Out of the gun ports they saw the sea sweeping by, and heard the swish and churning sound of the speeding water against the hull. Several times in heeling, the wave crest came up to the lee gun ports. It seemed to Buck that the Infinite was all about them and God seemed present and very close.

CHAPTER XI

BUCK MASTERS THE SEA AND A PORPOISE

WHEN Buck came on deck for the next morning's watch, the wind and sea were higher than they had been at midnight, though the ship still carried close-reefed topsails and stood full and by on the starboard tack. It seemed to Buck that the terrific force of the wind would tear the sails or carry away the masts, and the fierce waves struck the bow like a battering ram and kept the forecastle covered with water. The fore hatch was already battened down.

"Casey, it's rougher, don't you think so?"

"Yes, Mr. Jones, and I'm thinking you'll see some more seamanship before the watch is over."

Day broke about an hour later than usual, on account of the heavy clouds that swept overhead, so low that they seemed almost to touch the masts. About six bells the hatches were battened down aft, and Buck did see some good seamanship when the fore and mizzen topsails were furled and the ship hove to, under fore storm staysail, close-reefed main topsail, and mizzen storm sail. Casey watched Buck closely to see if he would give way and become seasick.

All the other cadets were lying around the railing, on the gratings. Some of them seemed deathly ill. But Buck put on his rubber boots and rain clothes and sou'-

wester, and went up and down examining the masts. This was the first part of the programme he laid out to gain "mastery."

Deep joy went through Casey's heart as he saw Buck come up on the topgallant forecastle to examine the head booms, in spite of the heavy pitching and the seas that dashed over. When the heavy waves struck, Buck would spread his legs, hold on to the guy and turn full face to the spray. Casey was a little uneasy. He saw two monarch waves descending and quickly got to leeward of Buck to grab him if he lost his hold, but as the solid water came over the bow, Buck lowered his head and bucked it as he used to buck the center of the football line. When he came down to ask about the securing of the masts and head booms, he remarked:

"Casey, it seems to me that the sea tries to bully a man," and he shook his head with defiance. The old sailor smiled and said nothing.

"I see you are investigating masts and head booms, Mr. Jones. I thought they didn't come in the lessons till the end of the cruise."

"We have running rigging this week, it is true, but I want to get hold of the other end of it."

Casey laughed outright, this tickled him so, for he had several times told Carrington that the new cadets should begin at that end. Casey was the only enlisted man in the service that took such liberties of expressing his opinions to his superiors. As a matter of fact, Buck had mapped out a logical programme by which he purposed to reach "mastery." He would have begun with the main features of the construction of the ship itself, but the conditions and facilities for investigating this field were limited.

When he went below for breakfast at eight bells, he

found the berth deck very close and stuffy and nausea began to set in. In all probability, if he hadn't hurriedly returned on deck, even his indomitable will power would have gone down before the overpowering force of seasickness.

The ship was hove to all day. It seemed to Buck that the sea had determined to wear the ship out. The rain came down in torrents, heavier than Buck had ever seen before.

"I see, Mr. Jones, that the glass has begun to go up a little and this rain will beat the sea down. I'm thinking you have won out."

Casey smiled, and Buck smiled back, as he realized that the old sailor had been watching the struggle.

"The sea was only trying your metal, sir, because it likes you. It'll be like an old friend to you hereafter."

"I think I'll cultivate the friendship," replied Buck; and from that moment he began to look upon the sea as a friend, and took delight in its thousand varying phases.

During the midwatch the rain still fell. Buck saw but little change in the wind, but the sea had gone down perceptibly. During the forenoon watch there was no question. The wind was falling steadily, and the sea was going down rapidly. In the first dogwatch they set the fore and mizzen topsails close reefed, and hoisted the jib and stood away at a lively speed, still on the starboard tack, and Buck thoroughly enjoyed the evening watch. When he came up for the morning watch the next day, and had a cup of steaming coffee and a piece of hard-tack, and helped to shake the reefs out of the topsails, he felt a great exhilaration as the ship bounded along, heading about north, northwest, on her course for New England. The seasick cadets began to take notice, and most of them appeared at breakfast with good appetites.

Along toward eight bells Buck ran forward, calling:

"Casey, Casey! What are these?" pointing to what seemed like a drove of big hogs leaping out of the water.

"They are porpoises, Mr. Jones. The sea is full of them."

Buck watched them with fascination as they crossed the bow and gradually disappeared to windward.

"They have the speed of a horse."

"You couldn't catch them on a hook, could you, Casey?"

"No, but sometimes, if you get down on the dolphin striker, you might harpoon one."

Buck's eyes gleamed. Casey got up the harpoon and Buck practiced, and two days later, while the ship was becalmed and the port watch was on deck, Casey let him down on the dolphin striker in a bowline, and for three hours Buck waited, enjoying the rise and fall of the bow in the sea swell which sometimes licked his feet. Twice he hurled at a dolphin, and missed. At last he spied a school of porpoises. They bore down upon the ship and began to circle around. Buck shivered with excitement. One appeared out ahead. Buck hurled, but missed. "I'll allow more for his speed next time." Another crossed deep down. Buck hurled and just grazed the tail. "There he comes." It was the big bull porpoise, heading straight for the dolphin striker. Buck could hardly restrain himself.

"I'll hurl now. No, wait, he may come out," and he balanced the raised harpoon with a patience and steadiness of arms that made old Casey dance around with joy. The reward came. The porpoise came to the top and almost struck Buck's feet, and as he came out of the water, Buck hurled the harpoon with all his might at close range.

It struck deep in the blunt snout of the great fish, which shook its bottle head and went down snorting like a bull.

"I've got him, Casey, I've got him."

The line was snatched through Buck's hands with so much force that it burned a blister.

"Let go your end, Mr. Jones."

"All right, Casey. Hold him at your end till I get on deck."

For nearly an hour they played the fish. They would bring him to the surface, then he'd dive again. One time he dived and came up on the other side of the ship.

"Why don't you shoot him? You may lose him if you keep on this way," advised Kelly.

"No," replied Buck emphatically. "We're going to land him fair and square."

A throng had gathered on the forecastle to watch the sport. Finally they got a noose with slip knot over his head, and bent on the foretop bowline and hoisted the struggling fish on board. It weighed seven hundred and sixty pounds. Buck's heart leaped. He had never had any sport at big game. The biggest thing he had ever bagged was a wild turkey weighing twenty-five pounds. He had caught a trout weighing eight pounds, with pole, and a mud cat weighing twenty-one pounds on a troutline.

"Look how the harpoon went in," said Casey proudly. "An old whaler could not have waited his time and put it in better."

They served porpoise steaks on board for three days. Casey himself took two choice steaks back to the Captain and to the wardroom, "With the compliments of Mr. Jones."

"Old Casey is living his youth over again in young Mr. Jones," remarked Dott as Casey deposited the steak and left, holding his head high with pride.

For the next few days the weather was ideal, the wind varying from almost a calm to a fresh breeze from the east. The ship kept on her course about north. The moon, that had been growing behind the clouds during the gale, began to preside by night. Buck thought the sea very beautiful by moonlight, with the silvery cylinder glinting on the dancing water, and with a wandering cloud at times throwing a mysterious shadow down. The whole sky took on a new beauty by day and by night. In the morning watches, Buck delighted in the dawn, when the stars and the great morning planet withdrew before the approach of the sun, and he delighted in the twilight when the moon and stars came on deck again to relieve the sun.

"They keep watch and watch," he would say to himself. He came to hold companionship with the constellations during the night watches, when Casey would tell him their names and point out the many forms they took on and have taken on in the imagination of men since the days when the Chaldean shepherds, the forerunners of the astronomers, watched their flocks by night and cultivated the friendship of the stars.

Buck was especially fascinated by the milky way.

"They tell me," remarked Casey, as Buck was pointing out the great sweep of the arch, "that it is arching over China at the same time, that it is like a big wheel in space."

"Then the earth is at the hub!" exclaimed Buck with keen interest.

"Somewhere around there," confirmed Casey.

Buck remained silent in deep meditation.

"The hub is an important part of a wheel. Maybe the earth is worth God's thought. Man is certainly the highest thing on earth. If the soul is really immortal, it must be very precious in God's sight."

As Buck meditated on the vault of the studded heaven overhead, sweeping down to meet the horizon of the sea, the mystery and wonder of the universe came upon him, but he did not shudder, for God seemed to be through it all, and the chill and loneliness disappeared. The healthy contact with life and nature was bringing Buck relief from the doubts that had threatened his faith.

One night Buck spent most of a whole watch canvassing the various stars. Finally he came up to Casey:

"The North Star is mine."

"Very well, Mr. Jones, the North Star is the oldest friend I've got living, but you can have it. I let Farragut have it while he was alive." After a pause he asked: "What made you pick out the North Star, there are hundreds of other stars that are brighter."

"Yes," said Buck, "but the North Star doesn't change. It's steadfast and true. It doesn't vaunt itself like those planets, but it's always there, and you know it's there even when it's out of your sight."

"That's just what Farragut said. I remember one night in '61 he was walking the quarter-deck.

"'Capt'n,' says I, 'you look mighty sad.'

"'Yes, Tim,' says he, 'I am sad. They've sent for me to go South. I love the South, Tim. I was born there. But I can't go, Tim, that's my star,' and he pointed to the pole.

"'She's been mine, Capt'n, but I'll let you have her,' says I."

Buck was silent for a while.

"My father told me," he began, "how sad it made General Lee when they came to him and asked him to take command of the Union armies. 'I love the Union,' he said, 'but from childhood I have felt that in our land a man's first duty is to his State.'"

There was silence. Buck felt that Casey did not approve of this doctrine, and he added, "Things are different now, of course. I suppose everybody believes that we owe our first duty to the flag." They sat awhile without speaking.

"Casey, it seems to me that everybody was sad in those days on both sides. My father was sad, my grandfathers were sad. They say Lincoln was sad, and Grant was sad. I'm coming to think that things and sides may vary, but that great and good men are all the same."

Casey nodded.

The routine exercises went ahead. It didn't take Buck long to work up the practical lessons assigned the plebes, for he had gone ahead and was already familiar with the standing rigging and the masts, and had begun to take up sails and the mechanics of propulsion by sail power, though this would not be taught for three years yet. He watched critically every maneuver and evolution, and plied Casey with questions. On watch and off watch he worked away methodically according to plans and programmes mapped out by himself to reach "mastery."

When the marks were posted at the end of the week, however, Rix was first, Catell second, and Buck was only third. The sketching was something new, and he disliked to spend so much time drawing in the bands, eyebolts, and every little detail, and keeping the sketches clean and neat. It seemed to be wasting time, and he simply couldn't do it well. Even when Fonste gave him a notebook to rule off for his first class record of the log, he returned it with blots and erasures, though he wanted to do the best for Fonste, and he heard the other first classmen, whose books had been ruled beautifully, guying him about his.

Catell and Rix had beautiful sketches, with shading and lettering as regular and exact as if printed or en-

graved. There were a dozen of his class whose sketches were better than his. It was only Buck's unrivaled grasp and description of the things themselves, and their uses, that put him up near the head.

"I'll have to stand first," he resolved again and again, as he applied himself to improving the sketching, but week by week Rix and Catell came out ahead.

On the Fourth of July all drills and exercises were omitted, and from the morning watch till sunset the ship was given over to celebration. At breakfast the cadets had flapjacks. The fresh provisions were running very low, but Pinckney managed to get up a creditable Fourth of July dinner, ending with plum pudding and nuts and raisins.

The men, also, had a special dinner, with "plum duff" for dessert, and after dinner began their sports, with the first lieutenant as umpire. The wardroom officers contributed to get up the prizes, which ranged from a twenty-dollar gold piece for the race over the masthead down to five pounds of tobacco for the "spud" race. In the race over the masthead, Buck never believed men could go up and down the rigging as some of the men did. They seemed to fly, never stopping for the lubber's hole, but going over the futtocks into the topmost rigging. Mike Kelly won with but a short lead over John Anderson.

"If Casey had entered neither of us would have stood a show, old as he is getting," said Kelly to Anderson.

Buck was keenly interested in the boxing contests and the fencing bouts, and was greatly amused at the three-legged race, but what he enjoyed most was the national salute, twenty-one guns, fired at noon as a big national flag flew out from the masthead. He was fairly thrilled with delight.

When they reefed topsails at sunset to get snug for the night, Casey remarked to Buck that he felt the New England coast was not far off.

"Yes," said Buck, "we must be getting in toward land, the water is beginning to look green. I never saw anything so blue as it was while I was harpooning the porpoise."

Casey smiled.

In the morning watch they hove the deep-sea lead. Buck thought it would never reach bottom, finally it stopped at two hundred and forty-seven fathoms.

"It's over a quarter of a mile deep," remarked Buck with astonishment.

"Where you harpooned the porpoise it was over two miles deep, Mr. Jones," replied Casey.

Buck marveled at such a thing. He began to examine the gray ground rock and sand brought up by the tallow in the bottom of the long heavy lead. "There must be strange things down there," he remarked.

"When I was sounding with my friend Commodore Maury in about three thousand fathoms, we brought up a small fish that had no eyes. It began to swell up, and finally popped open." As Casey finished these words, he exclaimed: "Look! look! there! Mr. Jones," pointing a short distance over the stern. Buck saw the water churning, a waterspout rose, and like a flash a monster whale leaped high out of the water, with a big swordfish hanging to his body. The swordfish dropped loose, and as the whale fell back he struck the water with his tail a terrific blow that sent the spray over the stern of the ship.

"If he hit him, it's all over, but I think he missed," remarked Casey as the whale disappeared.

Soon the water began to churn again, the monster

came up to the surface, bellowing like an infuriated bull, and lashed the water to foam.

"The swordfish has stabbed him again," said Casey, "and his sword is sawing its bloody way out."

The foam was becoming tinted with blood. Everybody on deck had come aft, and many from below had come up. The whale "sounded" again, and this time reached a considerable depth. Buck thought he was gone for good, but again he came up spouting, and leaped into the air with the swordfish hanging, and lashed the water with blow after blow of his mighty tail.

"How will it end?" asked Buck, all excitement.

"You can't tell."

"Do you think the Captain would let the ship stop, so we could see it out?"

"I'll see," and Casey went down to see Dott.

"What are you so interested in the fight for, Casey? You have seen a hundred such fights."

Casey admitted that it was for "Mr. Jones." Dott had observed the deep friendship and attachment.

"I'd like to do it for you, Casey. But we are trying to make port on schedule time, and I don't think the Captain would be willing to stop."

Casey came on deck disappointed.

"I'm sorry we can't stop, Mr. Jones. It seems we are due in port to-morrow, and the Captain wishes to get there by twelve o'clock, and it will take a good run to do it."

"I'm sorry. They've been at it furiously since you went below. Three times more they have come into the air, and for some time they have been wallowing as you see them now."

Casey got the telescope and leveled it on the rail for Buck to follow the fight as the ship drew away.

"It'll now be to the death. The whale is a peaceable

brute, and sometimes when he first finds a difficulty coming on, he'll sound to a great depth where his adversary cannot follow. But when he has been badly wounded his rage becomes terrible. If he kills the swordfish, then he'll go down to nurse his wounds. If not, he'll stay on the surface to the end."

Buck watched intently through the glass.

"They are still on the surface fighting. Look, Casey! It's terrible."

Casey looked. "I think the swordfish has reached a vital spot. The whale is in convulsions."

Buck took the glass again.

"I think it is quieting down. There's the whale, but he's stopped fighting."

"He's dead, Mr. Jones."

A revulsion of feeling came over Buck. He had been all eagerness during the fight. The great animal was dead! The ocean was full of tragedy like the land!

In the dogwatch Buck called out from his topsail yard lookout:

"Land, ho!"

"Where away?"

"Two points off the port bow."

Everybody smiled, including the officer of the deck, and the navigator.

"He's dreaming," the former said.

The latter remarked that the land must be thirty miles off at least, "unless we were all out in our time sights." He went on the forecastle and looked up at Buck in the yard with his hands over his eyes looking forward.

"Topsail yard, there, are you sure you see land?"

"Yes, sir."

The navigator climbed up to the yard and leveled his binoculars.

“You are right, Mr. Jones. I detect the top of the lighthouse. That’s Montauk Point.”

As they drew nearer, Buck lived over in imagination the feelings of Columbus when he first sighted land after his long and anxious voyage.

CHAPTER XII

BUCK PROVES THE STRENGTH OF HIS FRIENDSHIP FOR CASEY

AT 11.30 next morning they anchored in Martha's Vineyard on schedule time. The wind was favorable as they navigated in and out of the islands, though they had to tack several times. Buck thought several times that they must go aground, they came so close to land, but the water carried deep right up to the rocks.

Buck was delighted with the rugged coast, and loved to see and hear the swell strike full body against the cliffs.

As soon as the ship anchored, the mail orderly went ashore and brought up sacks of mail. All the cadets gathered around the mate of the berth deck as he called out the names.

Buck felt a strong thrill as he heard his name called out time and again. He must have had ten or twelve. He climbed up in the maintop to be alone. He arranged the letters in the order of the dates as stamped. He would read awhile, then look up and think, then read again. Thus he went through them all. Then he read his mother's letters again. He wished she were there. The tears came up, he knew not why; tears of love, tears of loneliness. His life seemed full, but his heart was hungry, hungry for his mother and the dear ones at home. He was manly, but he was human, and he was very young.

The ship remained at anchor two days. Fresh laun-

dry had come up from Annapolis. The steward laid in fresh provisions. How the cadets did relish fresh things again! At supper, plebes began drinking milk who had never cared for milk before.

The cadets were allowed to go ashore, and Buck and Preble went together, and had a good time. They went in swimming, and looked at the interesting shells and curios, and ate ice cream and cake. Buck wanted to buy some presents for his mother and sisters with the fifteen dollars left over from his entrance money, but Preble advised him to wait until they reached Portsmouth.

"Preble, don't they let the men go ashore? I wanted Casey to come ashore so I could have his photograph taken. My mother wants it. I have been writing her about him."

Preble smiled, then added: "I don't think Casey will go ashore. At least, I hope he won't. Unfortunately Casey gets drunk." Preble saw the shock that this gave Buck. "He is probably the best sailor the service has ever produced, and one of the truest men, but he grew up in the old days when grog was served in the navy as it is still served in foreign navies. He is a strong man, but about once a cruise the thirst comes over him and overpowers him."

Buck said nothing, but Preble saw the sadness in his face.

"Several times Casey has been offered a warrant, and he would doubtless have received a commission, but each time he declined. 'I'll stay before the mast,' he would say; 'that's all I'm fit for,' and they knew what he meant. Kelly has told me in confidence, Buck, that Casey has decided not to go on liberty this cruise. 'I'd die before I'd let Mr. Jones see me drunk,' he told Kelly."

Buck talked but little during the remaining time on shore. Preble noticed that he was downcast at supper.

"The pity, the pity of it!" he kept saying to himself.

They sailed that day and cruised off the New England coast as far up as the Banks of Newfoundland, and finally put in at Portsmouth, N. H., on the 20th of July.

The morning they approached port they found the big tug from the Kittery Navy Yard out near the Isle of Shoals, come out to meet them, and they furled sail and went up to the navy yard in tow, the tug alongside.

As they came up toward the Navy Yard, Buck began to ply Casey with questions.

"What old ship is that, built over like the *Santee*?"

"That's the *Constitution*, *Old Ironsides*," replied Casey proudly. "She looks desolate enough now, but there was a day when the sight of her sent terror through the enemy."

"Did you ever sail on her?"

"On three cruises, Mr. Jones, and a better sailer never rode the waves."

Buck knew well of the unparalleled record of this ship, that had carried the stars and stripes to victory in so many waters.

"And what vessel is that one that looks like the *Wyoming*?"

"That's the *Kearsarge*. She was put out of commission a few weeks ago."

"The one that sank the *Alabama*?"

"The same."

The *Constellation* was moored at the dock near the tall shear legs used in hoisting masts, and within an hour Buck had climbed to the top of them.

"Look at your friend up there, Casey. He's nothing but a boy," remarked Kelly.

"Yes; but you put him on duty, and he's every inch

an officer." Kelly admitted this, and Casey looked the pride he felt.

Buck enjoyed the two weeks' stay at Portsmouth. He enjoyed the water most, the great rise and fall of the tides. While the drills and lessons in practical seamanship went on all the time, the cadets were allowed to go out in the Navy Yard practically every afternoon. Buck was interested in the shops, though but little work was going on.

Buck did not confine himself to the shops of the yard, but explored the large tract of land owned by the Government, partly overgrown, partly in orchards, up and down the shore line. He found a cove over beyond the point, where the swimming was fine, and where he could sit on the rocks and watch the sea and hear the breakers. He took Preble and Catell and Billerson and other classmates there, and they would pick wild raspberries on the way, and swim together, but frequently he went alone to think about the sea and about life as it showed its new phases.

With all-day leave on Saturday, he and Preble took an excursion to the Isle of Shoals. Buck enjoyed the trip over and back, and made an inquisitive inspection in the engine room. It was the first time he had been on a steamer, and the engineer had to warn him several times not to get entangled in the machinery. He was fascinated with the smoothness and precision of the mechanism, and began to analyze the function of the different parts. After watching the way the steamer was brought to the dock with ease and precision, in contrast with the difficulties of the *Constellation*, he exclaimed to himself: "Casey is wrong. I love the sails, but steam is the thing to drive and control a ship," and he resolved to "master" steamers as well as sailing ships.

The days passed, delightful days for Buck and all the

others. They had a goodly amount of work, but, on the whole, it was more like a vacation, with frequent liberty for cadets and seamen.

The time for sailing was close at hand. Buck was sitting on the afterguard chest after supper, looking out at the lights across the bay. The upper classmen had gone ashore to a farewell dance given to them at the *Wentworth*. All the officers had gone but Dott and Lutze. Lutze was officer of the deck, and Dott came up and they were walking up and down together. Buck heard them use Casey's name, which attracted his attention.

"Casey is renewing his youth in that young Jones," he heard Lutze remark.

"Yes," said Dott, "his love for young Jones is making a new man out of him. To-morrow is the last day of liberty for the men and he hasn't asked to go on liberty once, but is content to stay on board ship and around the Navy Yard. I believe he has determined not to touch another drop."

"Very different from Malone," he added after a pause. "He is in double irons now. The ship's corporal caught him to-day smuggling liquor on board. He always has been a source of demoralization."

Buck went to bed very happy, thinking that perhaps he had been helpful to Casey. It was a new kind of happiness, in many ways the deepest that had yet entered his heart, for he loved Casey, and had grieved ever since he heard that drink had marred his life; but his happiness was doomed to be short-lived. Casey was dressed in blue the next morning. He had a restless look in his eyes and shunned Buck. This was very disturbing to Buck. When the liberty party left the ship at twelve o'clock, Casey was among them. Dott happened to come on deck at that mo-

ment, and Lutze, who had the deck for the forenoon watch, remarked:

"We spoke too soon about Casey."

"Yes," said Dott, with bitterness and disappointment. "It's all due to the liquor Malone smuggled on board. I'd like to see every drop of liquor in the world poured into the sea."

Buck was deeply depressed. At luncheon the last day of liberty happened to come up for discussion, and one of the first classmen told how on his plebe cruise the best swimmer on board had drowned while coming off.

"The boat capsized, it seems. They said he was drunk and got tangled up in the seaweed. The other two men in the boat escaped all right. I have always believed it was foul play. There are some toughs ashore who put on sailors' suits and get the men drinking and then rob them. Five years ago a seaman disappeared the last day of liberty and was never heard of again till his body was washed ashore two weeks later."

After lunch Buck went on deck to confer with Kelly. Kelly was in the blues, too.

"Can't we do something, Kelly?"

"No, Mr. Jones. Malone got him to take a drink last night. That started him. Nothing on earth can help him now." Then he added: "Such a pity, such a pity! He drew a hundred dollars from the paymaster this morning. When he comes back, he'll not have a cent. They'll rob him."

"Couldn't you go ashore and take care of him?" Buck asked.

"It's no use, Mr. Jones; it's no use," and Kelly went down the hatch, looking the picture of woe.

Buck climbed up in the maintop to think it all out, but he could not rest. Then he went down to the wash-

room and walked up and down alone. His anxiety for Casey grew.

"I'll go myself," he finally resolved.

Dott noticed how grave and determined Buck looked when he asked for permission to go ashore, and guessed what it meant.

"You will find it impossible to do anything, Mr. Jones, and I advise you to come back on the 5.30 boat."

Dott felt anxious all the afternoon. When Buck failed to appear on the 5.30 boat, the anxiety increased. When he did not come on the nine o'clock boat, Dott became alarmed and did not go to bed, hoping he might come over in a shore-boat, or come around by the bridge. At midnight he woke the Captain.

"Jones, B. P., has failed to return, sir. He went ashore this afternoon bent upon looking out for Casey, who is off on a spree again. I fear trouble from that gang of toughs. With your permission I will send Mr. Fonste, the cadet of the berth deck, ashore to confer with the police authorities and begin a search."

"Very well, Mr. Dott. Report to me the result."

Fonste came back about three in the morning and reported that the police had traced a cadet, also an old drunken sailor with two comrades, as far as the Isle of Shoals; all came on board to return on the night boat. Then the trace was lost. No one could be found who remembered seeing the cadet or the old sailor get off at the landing, though several saw the two comrades come off together. They were out then, searching for these two.

"What do they think?" asked Dott.

"They agreed that it was 'foul play,' and are very gloomy. The chief of detectives says the same thing has been done before by the same gang, and that there is not one chance in a thousand for the victims, and furthermore,

that unless their bodies are recovered at once, there will be slight chance for convicting the thugs."

Dott called the Captain, and they went together to confer with the Commandant of the Navy Yard.

"It's a sad case, Carrington. That gang of thugs has been preying upon our seamen for five years. We must break them up at any cost."

As a result of the conference, the Commandant issued orders for the navy-yard tug to be ready at daybreak to begin search for the bodies, to take a field howitzer in the bow and fire every few minutes during the search. Firing cannon over the water has often brought bodies to the surface.

When Buck started up from the landing he noticed the saloon with the sign "The First Chance." He had noticed before on coming down to the landing that on the other side the sign had "The Last Chance."

"This must be a special saloon to catch the sailors," he murmured, and the horror of the practice came over him. He went in and found a dozen sailors drinking and carousing. They were all astonished to see a cadet come in, and silence fell on the group.

"What will you have, sir?" asked the bartender with a bow.

"Nothing, thank you. But could you tell me where to find Tim Casey, the old boatswain's mate of the *Constellation*?" and Buck described Casey.

The bartender suavely denied any knowledge whatever.

Buck was about to leave, when one of the sailors spoke up. It was Olsen.

"Casey has been in here all the afternoon, Mr. Jones. He left about half an hour ago with two seamen who had

fought under Farragut; they were going to the Isle of Shoals. You can't do anything, Mr. Jones, when he gets started," he added.

"When does the boat leave?"

"At four."

Buck looked at his watch. Six minutes remained, and the wharf for the Isle of Shoals boat was a mile away. Buck left the saloon calmly. On the outside, he looked for a car. None was in sight. He could make it with lighter shoes. He would make it, anyhow; and he took the middle of the road on a dead run. Buck was conscious that people stopped to stare at him, and he hated to appear undignified in his uniform, but he thought of Casey and ran with all his might. The whistle blew when he was still a hundred yards away. He saw the deck hands beginning to cast off the lines. "Too late, too late," he murmured, but on he ran, increasing his speed as the road sloped down. The boat shoved off, but Buck still ran. The captain of the boat backed till he was well clear of the wharf, then put his helm hard aport and went ahead. The stern swung within five or six feet of the end of the wharf at the instant Buck arrived on a full run. He leaped, as he used to do in his contest for running broad jump—a dangerous leap, but he caught a stanchion as he struck the rail and brought up on board without injury. He caught his breath for a few minutes, then found the purser to pay his fare.

"Coming back for to-night? Round trip? There are some jolly tars on board."

"Single fare, please."

It was the first time a cadet had taken the late boat, and the purser eyed Buck closely as he saw the grim, stolid look on his face. Buck had a foreboding of trouble. The fact that he had disregarded Dott's advice and was bound

to overstay his leave would have weighed on him heavily at any other time, but now he never gave it a thought.

Buck, instead of becoming aroused, became phlegmatic. His pulse actually slowed down instead of going up. He didn't wish to speak unless words were absolutely necessary. His whole mind became centered on the situation and Casey's danger. His movements were slow and deliberate as he went up on the passenger deck. He pretended to be absorbed in looking out over the water as he drew near to where Casey and his two companions were standing behind the smokestack.

Appearing to follow the coast line around across the bow to the headland on the other side, he got a good look at the group. The two men were in sailor uniform and had hatbands of the *Kearsarge*. He had never seen such vicious faces. He cast his gaze back over the shore line and moved, as though unconsciously, closer to the group.

"We are joyous to meet you, old comrade," and the speaker slapped Casey on the shoulder. Buck noticed a peculiar snaggle of his right-hand lower teeth as he made a grimace of feigned pleasure.

"That we are. Let's drink to the Old Navy!" and the other one took out a flask and a small tumbler, filled it, and handed it to Casey, whose back was turned toward Buck.

"To the Old Navy it is," said Casey, as he staggered forward, took the glass, and drained it. He was too far gone to notice that his comrades didn't even make a pretense of drinking with him. In a few moments the second man slapped Casey on the shoulder.

"So you, too, fought under Farragut. Ah, there was a seaman for you!"

Buck noticed a peculiar squint that emphasized a scar behind the man's right eye.

"Yes, yes, yes, every inch—inch—a seaman," Casey stuttered.

"Let's drink to Farragut!" said the first man.

"Here's to Farragut!" said Casey, as he again drank the glass dry.

Buck revolved in his mind what to do.

"Shall I step in? Shall I report the matter to the officer of the boat?"

A sense of caution counseled: "Wait." Again and again they made Casey drink, always getting a rise out of him with the name of Farragut.

Buck appeared to walk up and down the deck, but he was never far away. As they approached the Isle of Shoals he heard the snaggle-tooth man say to the other aside: "He's nearly ripe." The smile with which he spoke was the most hellish thing Buck had ever seen. The three went over the gangway arm in arm, the two men supporting Casey in the middle.

"The old chap is three sheets in the wind, but his comrades seem to be able to look out for him," remarked the purser with a smile to Buck. But the smile vanished when he saw the set look on Buck's face as he passed without a word.

"A queer young midshipman. A mere boy, but he looks as stern as a man. He's probably staying out over night without leave for the first time," he thought.

After landing Buck followed a short distance behind the three. "Nearly ripe!" he kept repeating to himself, and he wished that he had taken the precaution to bring a Colt's revolver with him. "I must stay close by."

The three went into the nearest saloon and remained there. Buck passed up and down, and after dark walked around behind the saloon, where he could hear them as

again and again they had Casey drink "once more" to Farragut.

About quarter past eight he heard one of them say: "Come on, old comrade, it's time to go home. The boat leaves at 8.30."

They came out together, and the two had to hold Casey up as they went on board. The two men feigned to be half drunk themselves as they passed the purser.

"We served together under Farragut. He's loaded to the gunwale, but we'll look out for him!" said the one with the scar.

"What's the use of going up on deck? It's night and there is nothing to see."

"That's a fact. Let's stay down here," and they assisted Casey aft, and the three sat down on the guard rail over the starboard quarter. Buck took in the situation from the deck.

"Had I better go back now and try to take Casey?" Caution counseled: No. "Then I'll go up on deck just above them, where I can jump down."

"So you decided to go back to-night?" remarked the purser.

"Yes," said Buck, and he went slowly on deck, then gradually aft, till he stood close over the three men where he could see and hear them. As the boat got under way they gave Casey another drink, holding the glass to his lips for him, as a stupor had begun to set in. The night was dark and overcast. The boat had been out about twenty-five minutes, making about twelve knots an hour, when, in the dim light, Buck saw one of the men peer around one side of the deck house, then the other side.

"It's all clear," he said in a low tone. They shook Casey up. "One more drink to Farragut."

After pouring out the whiskey, the snaggle-tooth man poured something from a small vial into the whiskey.

"The fiends are drugging him."

"Take this for Farragut," and they poured the contents down Casey's throat. Then they quickly rifled his pockets and took out a wad of bills.

"Has he got a watch?"

"No."

"Got everything?"

"Yes."

Buck was just on the point of jumping down, when suddenly his hair stood on end. They took Casey by the legs and pitched him backward overboard. Buck dashed for the side, throwing overboard the ring life preserver that hung at hand as he went. In another instant he dived overboard headforemost. The speed at which he was going sprawled him out as he struck, but helped him to come up with his head pointing aft, and like a flash he was off with his fastest overhand stroke, covering the boat's length of distance to Casey in time to see him go down, with scarcely a struggle, in the eddy of the boat's wake. Buck dived in advance and swam obliquely under the water to cut him off as he went down. In the daytime he could see like a fish under water, but now the night was so dark that he groped about in vain, and finally came to the surface for a breath.

There was no time to be lost. Casey probably would not come up, with so much liquor in his stomach. There was but one chance.

He found the spot where the bubbles were still coming up, drew a long breath, threw his legs high in the air, and went straight down. Down, down he went till the pressure of the water strained his ear drums. Far down below him, his eyes now better accustomed to the dark-

ness, he discerned Casey, who was slowly sinking without a struggle.

Buck expelled a little bubble of air with a temporary relief, and went deeper.

Under the vigorous exercise nature made cruel demands for breathing. The impulse to breathe out all the air in his lungs became torture, and, finally, he was driven to expel another precious bubble. Again the torture became intolerable, this time sooner than before, and in spite of almost superhuman control, he had to expel a third bubble as his hands reached Casey's head and seized the long collar of his jacket. He pulled with such tremendous effort that it stopped Casey and started him upward. Another bubble had to go. Holding Casey by the collar, with his left hand straightened above his head, Buck started on the journey upward, using his right hand and legs with giant strokes.

"It's quick or never," he thought, and he redoubled his strokes. Another bubble. Another—still another—and yet another. On he struggled. Every tissue in his body demanded oxygen. The impulse to draw in became more terrible than had been the impulse to blow out. His efforts became frantic. The agony almost passed the limit of human endurance. "Let the end come," the tortured body demanded. "No," commanded the spirit. "Let it come! Let it come!" "No, it's for Casey."

A terrible dread came over Buck lest his spirit should give way. He put forth convulsive efforts, and seemed to find momentary relief, but nature came back like a battering ram. "Open your mouth and end it all," it demanded. "No." "Open! Open!!" "No, it's for Casey, it's for Casey." "Open! Open!! Open!!!" "Never! Never!! Never!!!" and Buck ground his teeth together. They set as in lockjaw. He lowered his

chin and pressed it against his collar bone to hold it fast. The spirit had conquered. Buck worked on with steadier strokes, but it seemed that the end would never come. Strange burning pains began to pass like lightning flashes back and forth through his head. But it mattered not to Buck. A great peace had come over him. Suddenly Casey's weight seemed heavier, Buck's hand holding the collar became chill.

At that instant his head popped out. They were at the surface. Buck threw up his head, opened his mouth wide and drank in the air. Thirst for water may become terrible, but it can never compare with the thirst for air. No perishing caravan in the desert ever drank at the oasis with the eagerness and joy that Buck drank the fresh air of heaven. There was exultation of spirit, too. He had won! He had won! Then instantly the forlorn situation came over him. He yelled at the top of his lungs: "Boat, there! Boat, there!" but his voice was lost over the waste of water. The boat was a good mile away, and getting farther away constantly. He had not thought to call out "Man overboard" when he jumped. But Buck never wasted time over regrets, and it required strong efforts to keep Casey on the surface.

He swam, pushing Casey along, and finally found the white cork ring buoy. With some difficulty he got it over Casey's neck, then one arm through, and finally the other arm through, and though the buoy lodged under the armpits and kept Casey's head and neck out to the shoulders, there was great difficulty in keeping his face above water, as in the stupor his head dropped over limp. Buck was shivering, and his teeth were chattering under the chill of the cold water.

He glanced out at the distant lights of the city, with their gleam against the sky, then at the Shoal Island Light.

He scanned the horizon carefully. A longing and a feeling of regret passed over him as he saw the mast and cabin lights of the steamer drawing farther and farther away.

If they only knew on board! And the assassins would get ashore and off safe! Anger against them came over Buck as he looked at Casey. The chill seemed to penetrate to his very bones in spite of the vigorous kicking.

It must have been five miles to the island. Buck measured the distance with his eye. They could not make a half mile an hour, and would probably stiffen soon in the cold.

The situation gave scarcely a ray of hope. The sky was black, the sea was black. The swell tossed them up and down.

All in all, it seemed best to try for the island, and Buck struck out with stout heart, pushing Casey ahead. The leg stroke was the main thing, he remembered, and he drew his feet up and pulled off his shoes, one at a time, with the use of one hand, and swam on with a better stroke. Soon he took off his blouse, pulling the suspender buckles up to keep the trousers high, and swam on with a still better stroke.

Buck ducked Casey's head under water and half strangled him, and soon the man began to vomit. Twice more Buck stopped for this purpose, and after the second time Casey gave signs of consciousness, and muttered something incoherent about Farragut. On Buck swam, pushing with his left hand, swimming with his right hand.

Soon his left hand became numb; he changed hands. Both hands became numb, and he felt both of his feet getting numb. He looked at the light on the island so far away.

"It's no use. It can't be done. I'll keep on all the

same," he groaned, and he doggedly swam harder, avoiding looking at the light so far away. He was thinking how lonely and cold and dark it was when he was startled by a noise not very far away. "It's a whale. No, it's a porpoise. There's a school of them." Superstitious thoughts passed over him.

"They are after me; coming to avenge their comrade that I harpooned." It sounded to Buck as though there were a hundred of them; two passed very close, one almost grazed his legs. Buck shuddered, then almost laughed at himself. A porpoise had never been known to attack a man. They were heading his way. "I wish I could hitch on to one of them," he thought, and he was almost smiling at the idea of driving a porpoise like a team when his thoughts were brought back with a shock. A big creature came from ahead and paused but a few feet away, then passed close, and Buck saw it turn and follow them.

It was a shark! A sudden terror seized Buck. He kicked the water furiously; the shark stopped for a moment, then came on closer, still edging over to Casey's side.

Buck jerked Casey over to the other side and kicked furiously. He felt his numb toes strike the shark's head. It drew off for a time into the shadows of the night, then came forward on Casey's side again. Buck's anger was rising.

"The coward, he's after Casey because he's helpless."

Buck got Casey's jackknife and lanyard, and with his teeth and one hand opened the big blade, easing up on his kicking. The monster swam up closer and closer, turned on his back, his belly showing white, and struck straight to take Casey about at the hips. They were rising on the slope of a sea swell. Buck dashed into the

swell, and they were carried over. To his infinite relief the shark, startled perhaps by his cries and the motions of his limbs, was nowhere to be seen. Buck breathed more freely once more, gathering renewed strength from this passing of a grave danger.

Buck swam on and on. The numbness gradually crept up from his ankles and his wrists.

"When it reaches the body I suppose something will happen," he reflected, but there was no dread in his heart. He was surprised at himself that there was not; but in the dive for Casey his spirit had subdued circumstance. He would keep on as long as he could move a muscle. And on he swam. The numbness crept up, on above his knees and the elbows, but still he swam. It seemed that he had been swimming for days. The light seemed considerably nearer, but he thought that probably they hadn't made more than a mile and a half. He swam on. He couldn't understand the light, and wondered if his senses were affected. It didn't look a mile away. And on he swam. Suddenly he cried aloud:

"I can't be mistaken. There it is. I can see the top outline of the tower. Oh! it's the tide, it's the tide that has brought us!" His heart leaped with joy, but almost instantly sank. "It's sweeping us by. It'll sweep us out to sea," he moaned. He redoubled his efforts. They were steadily passing by. Still on the tide bore them, though the land was not a hundred yards away. Oh, the anguish of failure as victory was almost in grasp!

Buck shook Casey.

"Casey! Casey!! Could you swim a little? Try to swim! Try to swim!"

Casey seemed to understand and tried to move his arms and legs, but they were stiff. It was useless. They were nearing the outmost point. The current was run-

ning faster. They would pass within fifty yards of the point. Buck heard an insidious whisper in his ear:

"You could make it by yourself."

"No, I can't leave Casey."

"You've done your best," whispered the voice.

"No, no, I won't leave him; I won't."

"But he is old. He would probably die from this exposure, anyhow. It's all his fault. You are young and life is sweet. He is alone. You have a mother and father and brothers and sisters. You owe it to them as well as yourself."

They were now passing the point.

"O God! help me to be true." Buck felt so cold and so tired. The shore so close at hand was infinitely tempting. "It's the last chance. Go! Go!! Go!!!" prompted the voice.

"Never! Never!! Never!!!" he cried aloud.

He ground his teeth together, put his head against the buoy, face down, and with a revolving overhand stroke with both hands made a final supreme effort. The spiritual victory seemed to double his physical strength. His stroke was furious, as though he had not already been through enough to exhaust a dozen men. He raised his head to get a breath, but never lost a stroke and never stopped to glance at the land. He was going at this furious stroke when he felt a dull pain in his toe. The cramps at last! He knew it would soon be over when the dreaded cramps set in. He took a breath and plunged in, face down, and drove his stroke yet higher. The other foot felt a shock. It was an obstacle. Then both feet.

Casey dragged. Buck looked up; they were in the cove! The furious spurt had brought them in till they reached the eddy or counter current behind the point which swept in close to the shore.

Buck stood up. The water was waist deep. He soon recognized the cove where he and Preble had gone in bathing. Casey could not stand. Buck took him on his shoulders. The clock struck two as he roused the startled inmates of the cottage on the point.

CHAPTER XIII

BUCK FINDS HIMSELF A HERO

IT was about nine o'clock when the tug returned to the Navy Yard, with Buck and Casey on board.

The intermittent firing had roused the countryside, and as the cause became known a deep gloom settled upon the Navy Yard. All were surprised when the firing ceased as they reached the Isle of Shoals, and when the tug was sighted on its premature return everybody went down to the wharf.

"They're both on board, doing well," answered Surgeon Woodgate to the anxious questions as the tug drew near.

They brought Casey off on a stretcher, wrapped in blankets, looking like a corpse. Buck came over the side unaided, with a broad boyish smile for those who greeted him, although his lips and face were still blue and his cheeks and eyes were sunken; his legs and feet were in bandages. Woodgate hastened to the Captain to report.

"They are both doing well, sir. There must have been apo-morphine in the drug the villains used; it kept Casey's heart going. The circulation had practically stopped in his arms and legs, but Mr. Jones procured prompt medical assistance. We found Mr. Jones and the two physicians on the island working to restore the circulation. The stupor reduced the nervous shock. If we can keep the heart going for twenty-four hours, he'll probably come around all right in spite of his age."

"How about Mr. Jones?"

"He's all right, sir. I am going to write his case up for the medical journal. He was five hours in the cold water. His feet and legs were considerably lacerated by the barnacles and rocks, as he groped his way in the dark with Casey on his shoulders."

"Ask him to come to the cabin when he is comfortable."

"Report to the Captain, Mr. Jones," said Woodgate, as he came into the sick bay. When Buck reached the cabin, the Commandant of the Yard had come on board and was talking earnestly with the Captain. They paused as Buck entered.

"I am sorry to have overstayed my liberty, sir."

"Never mind that. Would you mind telling me about your adventure?"

Buck told them very briefly.

"You can stay on the sick list till further orders."

"I'd rather not go on the sick list, sir. I'm feeling all right. I wish, however, you would let me go ashore after those scoundrels. They might get away if we wait."

The two officers caught the resolute look in Buck's eyes. It was agreed that the tug would take him over at once.

"Civilian's clothes would be best, so they won't suspect, but I have none."

"I'll fit you out." And Carrington ushered Buck into his stateroom. "A little big for you, Mr. Jones, particularly the coat, but they will answer. I'm afraid I can't help you out in shoes."

Buck had big feet naturally; with the swelling and bandages they looked enormous. He saw the twinkle in the Captain's eye.

"Tell the yeoman to issue you a pair if there is a pair on board large enough."

Both smiled. The officer of the deck smiled, too, when Buck saluted and went down the gang plank with a pair of "specials, number fourteen," on, and with the big coat bulging out with a big service Colt's revolver in each side pocket.

The Commandant went over on the tug. He was as eager as Buck to see the thugs captured. On the way over he had Buck write out and sign in his presence a full detailed description of the two men. After this Buck went down to the boiler room to make sure of his revolvers.

"The first thing to do is to make a man throw up his hands. I'll have to drill my left hand." He exercised his left hand; then he rehearsed with both hands at the same time, pressing the triggers to make the self-cocking hammers come back together till on the edge of firing, then easing them down again.

As they stepped off the tug a gentleman complimented the Commandant upon the miraculous rescue. The Commandant bowed, but said nothing.

"I'm afraid, Commodore, it is already widely known on shore. Maybe they have already fled the city."

"I was thinking the same thing myself, Mr. Jones."

At that moment they heard the incoming "Boston Limited" whistle.

"I'm going to the depot," said Buck quickly. "I'll call you up at police headquarters," and he was off to the right at a trot, dragging his big shoes. His feet began to ache, but he kept up his trot till he reached the station, panting, as the passengers were going on board. He climbed on the rear sleeper and started through, looking at the passengers from the rear as he went. He had

scarcely entered the second Pullman when he saw the two men quietly arranging themselves.

"No doubt about it," he murmured, as his heart began to slow down a little. He left the train and hurried to the 'phone booth.

"Police headquarters. Quick!"

There was no excitement in the voice, but Central dropped everything and gave him the wire.

"Police headquarters?"

"Yes."

"The Commodore, please."

"Here he is."

"I have them, sir, on the Limited. She is pulling out. Flag her before she gets out of town. If too late, then the first stop. Find us in the next to rear sleeper. I'll stay with them."

The 'phone snapped before the Commodore could say a word, and Buck rushed out and caught the rear steps as the Limited pulled out. He went quietly forward and sat down in the seat just in front of the men, pretending not to notice them. As he passed, his pulse slowed down again. That phlegmatic feeling came over him. His whole being concentrated on the situation. He looked out of the window, and with a side glance scanned the men. The one with the scar slapped the other on the knee.

"We're off, old pal. We're too smart for them."

Buck noted the speed as it increased; they crossed street after street and reached the suburbs.

"I suppose it was too late," said Buck.

At that moment the train whistled and began to slow down. The two men became nervous. The brakeman came hurrying back.

"What's the matter?" asked the snaggle-tooth man.

"Don't know, sir. They've thrown the block on us." The brakeman passed on to the rear.

Buck looked out of the window. The men became restless as the train came to a stop. Buck put his hands in his pockets and gripped the revolvers, playing with the triggers.

The men glanced around the car. Buck noticed both of them feel their inside breast pockets.

One of them stood up, then sat down again. Soon a clatter began to be heard. Both men listened breathlessly. It became louder.

"A fire?" questioned the snaggle-toothed man. No answer from the other as he listened.

"It's the patrol." They both crouched down and glanced at the doors.

"The window is best," said the man with the scar, as he began to raise the inside window. He raised it full up, then raised the other window likewise and paused to look.

Buck slowly drew the revolvers, keeping them close to the back of the seat, and turned slowly around and got on his knees on the seat, keeping down low.

"There it comes! The patrol! Let's jump off!"

Both rose and turned toward the window.

"Halt! Hands up!"

They turned to find Buck's revolvers resting on the back of the seat and leveled. Both reached for their breast pockets.

"Try it, if you dare," and Buck played on the triggers. The men saw the hammers go back. Crouched down behind the seat, Buck had the double drop on them, and they threw their hands up quickly.

"The man that moves a muscle is a dead man!"

They understood what such words meant, spoken with

such firm determination. They little realized that it was only a country boy, not long in his teens, who had never been known to use such threats before.

The passengers were in consternation, as three policemen came simultaneously through each door.

"You caught them going through the window?" asked the first sergeant to arrive.

"Yes, as they started. Their guns are in their breast pockets, sergeant."

Buck remained as motionless as a setter dog pointing.

"Well done, Mr. Jones," said the Commodore, as he came up while the men were being disarmed, two revolvers and a long dagger being taken from each.

"We've been wanting you both for some time," remarked the sergeant.

"I'd like to know what for. We're going to bring suit for your arresting peaceful citizens on the train this way. We were only opening the windows to get some fresh air."

Buck marveled at the coolness and resourcefulness of the ruffians. It was of no avail, however. Buck's complete identification and detailed testimony led to their conviction and sentence to twenty years in the penitentiary.

The *Constellation* was scheduled to sail the next day, August 3d, but put off the date in order to let Casey identify the prisoners and give his testimony.

That morning Woodgate reported to the Captain on Casey's condition. "He is recovering rapidly, sir, and will be able to testify to-morrow or next day. But he still refuses to take any brandy or whisky to stimulate his circulation. It's a touching case. At times he weeps like a woman when anyone speaks of Mr. Jones. 'It didn't

matter very much about my old hulk,' he said to me as I prescribed the dose of whisky, 'the liquor wrecked me long ago, but if it hadn't been for a miracle it would have brought the lad to his death. No, doctor, I'll not take a drop, if going without it costs me my life,' and it was useless to insist. When I sent him an eggnog, he detected the liquor flavor and poured the whole thing into the scupper."

About noon the orderly brought a telegram to Buck, "The Captain's compliments. He has wired an answer, but suggests that you wire also." Buck read the telegram anxiously; it was dated Sumter, Ala., August 3d, 9 A.M., and addressed to the commanding officer of the U. S. S. *Constellation*, Portsmouth, N. H. Buck's heart leaped. It read: "Telegram from Montgomery reports my son, B. P. Jones, in adventure and subjected to long exposure in water. Please wire his present condition." Signed Robin Jones.

It was warm and fresh, and tears came to Buck's eyes as he thought of his father and mother and all the dear ones at home. He wired back: "Am all right. So is Casey. Love for all. Buck."

"I'm so glad I was true and didn't give up. I could never have looked my father in the face again."

Buck's young nature with its great elasticity had already recovered its normal condition and he had thrown off the incident, but now and then he thought of the temptation that had come over him.

"A thousand times better to be dead," and he shuddered at the thought. "I might have given way. I think I would have given way if God hadn't helped me."

The thought made him very humble in the midst of all the praise and showers of congratulations that began coming in that afternoon. Among others, there was a

telegram from the Secretary of the Navy, and later from the President of the United States. Correspondents flocked on board and insisted on interviews. Buck was greatly relieved when the ship sailed on the 5th and he could get away from it all.

After the ship had dropped the tug and stood away under all plain sail to the southeast, Buck went down to the sick bay to see Casey.

"We're off, Casey; we're off. Isn't it fine to get to sea again?"

"Yes, Mr. Jones. I catch the whiff of the brine. It puts new strength in me. My old bones are beginning to limber up again." Then, after a pause, Casey continued: "I was wondering, Mr. Jones, how you could take all that trouble for an old derelict like me," and they began talking over the experience in the water. Finally, Buck made a clean breast of it.

"Twice I was base enough to think of leaving you, Casey, and I cried out to God—without help I'm sure I would have failed. But I would never have known a happy moment again."

There was a long pause. Buck saw a strange but tender look in Casey's eyes.

"Mr. Jones, do you believe in God? I had given up the belief long ago."

"Yes, Casey. At times, as I reason, it seems I doubt, but I don't think I'll doubt any more. My mother is right. There is a God and God is good, and we must try to do our part." Somehow, tears came to Buck's eyes, he hardly knew why. Ordinarily he would have been ashamed. Casey took him by the hand. There was moisture in the old sailor's eyes, too. Their souls held hands as they touched the infinite together.

CHAPTER XIV

BUCK SHOWS PROFICIENCY IN UNEXPECTED WAYS

THE next day was Sunday. When Buck was leaving the washroom, Stratford called him back.

“Turn the basin on full!”

Buck turned the water on.

“Draw a deep breath!”

Buck drew a deep breath.

“When I say ‘three!’ I want you to dive for Casey. And don’t you come up till you have him.”

A smile twittered about Buck’s lips.

“Wipe off that smile! It’s no laughing matter to dive for a drowning man.”

Buck wiped the smile off and tried to look solemn.

“Are you ready? One—two—three—dive!”

Buck soused his head in the basin till the water came up to his ears and ran out over the deck.

“Search for him! Search for him!!”

Buck moved his head around and reached down his arms, as though searching under water.

“Have you found him?”

Buck nodded his head.

“Then bring him up!”

Buck held his left hand out, closed as though holding on to an object, and pawed the air with his right hand as though swimming for the surface, then threw his head

up out of the basin with a swing that sent the water flying. Stratford roared and Buck laughed behind his hands as he wiped the water from his face.

"Well done, Mr. Jones. Now go through the drill in one motion. Stand by, dive for Casey!"

Buck soused down, searched, and came up with great precision.

"Come here, Moble, and see the new drill," called out Stratford.

Moble, who was passing, came in. When he saw Buck go through the process he almost split his sides, and went to the washroom door and called in all the upper classmen about the deck. Again and again Buck went through the process, and the realism kept the upper classmen in gales of laughter. Some of the plebes became curious and sidled up that way to discover what was going on. Stratford spied them.

"Come here, Mr. Billerson! Come here, Mr. Pike-man! Come here, Mr. Rix! Come here, all of you ignorant plebes and learn the latest drill!"

Curiosity gave way to consternation as the plebes came among the laughing upper classmen.

"The drill is called 'Dive for Casey.' It is done in three motions—dive, search for him, bring him up. Mr. Jones, show these eager plebes how to do it. In three motions, dive for Casey. Stand by; dive; search for him!"

Buck searched.

"Bring him up!"

Buck brought him up.

"Squad, take your basins!"

The plebes distributed themselves, each to a basin.

"Fill them full! Are you ready?"

"In three motions, dive for Casey. Stand by, dive!"

Put your head in deeper, Mr. Pikeman. What do you mean, Mr. Billerson, by strangling yourself like a baby?"

They all stood up dripping.

"Try that first motion over again. Stand by, dive! Search for him!"

The upper classmen roared at the awkward movements.

"You'll never find him at that rate, Mr. Pikeman. Reach out and feel for him. Bring him up!"

They came up together panting and dripping.

"Mr. Jones, you are proficient; I'll make you captain of the squad. Now drill the others until they are competent to do the drill in one motion."

Buck proceeded to give the orders and the drill progressed well, except in the case of Pikeman, who slouched over the motions.

"Mr. Jones, you'll have to have an awkward squad for Mr. Pikeman. Give him special drill. Go ahead with him, Mr. Jones."

And Buck put Pikeman through the drill alone. Everybody roared, including the dripping plebes, as they watched Pikeman as he came up puffing and blowing like a porpoise, black in the face with anger.

When the crowd broke up to get ready for quarters, Buck heard Pikeman say to Ninman:

"It's all Jones's fault. I'll get even with him yet." Everybody else was in great humor.

"We give you the prize, Stratford," said Moble; "'Dive for Casey' is the best drill ever invented for a plebe."

"I got it up to see if Mr. Jones's head had been turned."

Stratford builded greater than he knew. "Dive for Casey" became the favorite form of "running" at the Academy. If there were no basin or tub at hand, the

luckless plebe would have to dive into the wardrobe or under the table or in a locker.

It was the first Sunday in the month, and after quarters and general inspection all hands were called aft on the quarter-deck to hear the Articles of War. Buck had heard the Articles of War twice before, the first Sunday in July and the first Sunday in June; but they had not made the impression they did this time. He was particularly impressed with the clause that called on everyone in the naval service "to set a good example of sobriety, of virtue, honor, patriotism, and subordination," and with the clause, "It is earnestly enjoined upon all officers and enlisted men diligently to attend upon every occasion the worship of Almighty God." Though still a boy all over, Buck had recently sounded to a great depth in the ocean of life.

At church service everybody was surprised to see Casey come out of the sick bay and take a seat. It is true his seat was back in the rear, but no one had seen Casey come aft to church service at all for twenty years. He seemed to take no part in the service, but a close observer could have seen his eyes light up as he watched Buck. The boy had opened up a new depth in the life of the old sailor.

The ship headed almost due south for three days, with a moderate breeze from the east. Wednesday night the rumor went around that the Captain had said that if the breeze moderated a little, he intended to have target practice. Buck was all eagerness through the morning watch, as the day dawned clear and bright and the breeze went down.

The carpenter's gang came up on the forecastle about six bells and began to rig the target. Crossplanks were

lashed to casks; a pole about eight feet high was erected from the middle; canvas wings attached to guys were lashed to the top of the pole and carried out to the ends of the planks; the center was painted black so that no matter what side might be turned, it would be a white triangular target with a large black bull's eye. A solid shot was hung from the bottom of the pole, and a strap with a toggle was secured to the top to hoist the target over the side with a yard-arm whip.

It was all ready for letting go, when at three bells Casey assembled the boatswain's mates and all piped together:

"All hands clear ship for action!"

Buck's blood bounded as he rushed to his duties, and he marveled at the wonderful activity that quickly cleared the decks and provided the precautionary measures for the contingencies of battle. He saw the target dropped overboard as the bugles sounded to quarters, and he rushed down to his gun.

"Cast loose and provide!"

He rushed to the magazine hatch with his pouch, and this time brought a charge of powder in a long canvas bag. He had never seen so much powder before.

"Load!"

He jumped out to the port and opened the pouch for the loaders to get the charge, was off to the hatch and back with another charge before the shell had been driven home.

"Range, one thousand yards."

The sight bars were adjusted.

"Fire in turn, beginning aft!"

Looking out of the port, Buck saw the target come into view on the quarter. It looked very small. He heard the captain of Number Twelve Gun, the next gun aft, say, "Ready!" Then a crash came. Buck's head was too far

out of the port and the shock almost threw him to the deck. He thought his ear drums were broken. But as the smoke quickly drifted by, he heard Dott call out:

"Short and to the right. Range, twelve hundred yards."

Fonste, Buck's gun captain, readjusted his sight bar.

"Lower—lower—handsomely—well—right hand spike—ready—fire!" A terrific crash! The monster gun recoiled and was brought up by the heavy breeching. The crew gazed out of the port. Buck saw the shell rise, higher, higher, getting smaller and smaller. It seemed heading straight for the target, but then seemed to drift to the right. It struck to the right and short, exploding as it struck.

"Still short, and to the right. Range, fourteen hundred yards."

Soon Number Eight fired.

"Still short, and to the right. Range, fifteen hundred yards."

Number Six fired.

"To the right and over."

Buck watched with fascination each shell fired. Several exploded in the air, the fuse being cut too short. Several struck and ricocheted, a thing that made Buck wonder. But all seemed to drop to the right.

"Fire by battery. Port battery aim."

Buck stood on his tiptoes. All the guns on the port side were being laid.

"Ready! Fire!!"

Twelve guns belched fire. The ship vibrated. Every timber shook. Buck imagined that it was the *Constitution* hurling her broadside against the *Guerrière*. He jumped to the port, expecting to find the target destroyed. The smoke still shrouded the ship as he heard the shells ex-

ploding, and when it lifted he was sorely disappointed to see the target was still riding untouched, while the little puffs of smoke were drifting over it, and a few shells that did not explode were still making waterspouts, ricocheting far beyond.

"Each gun fire two shots at will."

All the gun captains knew this would be the end.

Buck noticed decided improvement in the shots. One that Casey fired splashed water on the target. Fonste fired a deliberate shot, which again fell to the right and a little short.

"The next is our last," warned one of the crew.

"I'll do my best," said Fonste. "But I can't quite understand how they keep falling to the right." And he went off to consult the officer of the division about making an allowance in his sight bar.

"The first division has finished, sir."

"The second division has finished, sir."

All had finished but Gun Number Ten. Buck was looking over the gun to see how the target looked through the sight. He picked up the lanyard and began to tauten it to see how it felt.

The gun was laid, all except the last touches of the hand spikes. The target was a little off to the right. Buck practiced catching the moment when the ship was at the end of a roll. He noticed that she was swinging slowly. The target drew nearer to the line of sight.

"If I were firing, I'd allow for its continually going to the right." He had made such allowances for quail and duck on the wing. He did not understand the strange, irresistible impulse that came over him. It may have been hypnotic.

The lanyard was taut. The sight pointed a little to the left of the target. The ship quivered, motionless on

an even keel. Now is the time. The temptation was too great. "Here goes, come what may!" He threw his weight back on the lanyard. The fire flashed, the gun recoiled, upsetting several members of the crew who were not expecting it. Fonste came running over.

"How did the accident occur?"

Pikeman pointed to Buck, who was half out of the port watching the flight of the shell. Even to a seasoned gunner there is always a keen fascination in watching the flight of a projectile he has fired. Buck was entranced. The shell seemed very slow, heading to the left, rising very high, back to the right, and sinking downward in its flight. Buck held his breath. The shell exploded. The target vanished. A shout went up all over the ship.

"Well done, Number Ten," came the voice of the first lieutenant. "Secure."

"He ought to have been court-martialed. He might have killed half the crew," said Pikeman to Ninman that night. "I was sitting over the cabin skylight and heard it all. Jones confessed he was wrong and said he would take the punishment. But Carrington only warned him, and, when he was gone, broke out into a laugh. Just wait till we get our class organization. Then we'll check him."

The weather was ideal during the rest of the cruise, and the ship passed in the Capes and anchored off Fortress Monroe on August 20th—the schedule date. The *Phlox* was there waiting with mail and fresh provisions, including a load of watermelons, which combined with the letters to make Buck homesick.

The ship lay at Fortress Monroe three days. Buck had managed to keep in the first conduct grade, though he was on the ragged edge. Consequently, he had leave

every afternoon and enjoyed going all over the historic fort, and taking swims and eating a big dinner twice at the old Hygeia Hotel. One day he went over to Hampton and over to the beach off which the *Merrimac* and *Monitor* fought.

On the 26th they sailed, but only to stop off the mouth of the *Patuxent*. Here they remained three days, having special drills, like sending down topsail yards and top-masts, sailing the cutters, "arm and away" boats for cutting out service.

The third class was impatient and began to abuse Car-rington for delaying. Finally they anchored off Annapolis on the 29th.

The next morning, the third classmen manned the capstan bars by themselves, and ran around at a break-neck speed, the last "up anchor" for the cruise. Buck tried to get in, too, but they ran him out.

The *Phlox* and the *Standish* came out, and by noon the *Constellation* was moored at her buoy off the *Santee's* wharf. By sunset the first and third classmen were away singing and rejoicing on their leave, and the plebes were back on the *Santee*, recently vacated by the second classmen, who had already gone on leave.

Learning that the *Constellation* would sail for Norfolk the next day to get ready for a cruise with apprentices, Buck went off on board after supper and spent the evening with Casey. It was sad for them both, though both kept up appearances of light-heartedness.

"We'll meet again next May, Mr. Jones. My time is up this winter, but I expect to reënlist and to ship for next year's practice cruise."

"Take good care of yourself, Casey."

"And you take good care of yourself."

The tears almost came as the old sailor realized that

he would not care to live any longer if anything happened to Buck.

"Good-by, Kelly. Good-by, Anderson. Good-by, Olsen." Buck shook hands with nearly half the ship's company. As the dinghy's crew pulled him ashore, he thought it no wonder we won victories in the past, with such men behind the guns.

Buck lay awake in his hammock on the *Santee* some time after taps. He felt a void, a sinking feeling about the heart, as he finally dropped off to sleep, realizing that the plebe cruise was over and Casey was gone.

CHAPTER XV

BUCK DISTINGUISHES HIMSELF IN SOME THINGS AND FAILS IN OTHERS

MALADIES like homesickness, despondency, and heartache had but little showing at Annapolis. There was literally no time to indulge in them. Drills and exercises began the very next morning, and in a few days the cruise seemed a matter of the past. Buck was much interested, like all the others, in the prospect of new members joining their class. The town was flooded with candidates in the midst of the September examinations. Buck, along with the others, felt a certain superiority when he saw the candidates in their badly fitting civilian clothes.

Saturday afternoon the May plebes went out in town and spread consternation among the candidates, making them put on "sir" and stand at attention with "fins out"; some were even made to stand on their heads. Buck took no part in this, having already resolved that he would do no hazing when his turn came; but he understood the feelings and impulse that prompt hazing. He did not believe in hazing as an institution, but he was coming to be more tolerant toward the milder forms.

Sixty-seven of the 117 candidates passed the examinations, and in ten days the class numbered 106. Buck was keenly interested in the new men, and soon began to like some of them very much, though a certain formality still lingered between the May plebes and the Sep-

tember plebes. The former could not help but look down on the latter, though these gradually became efficient in the drills and, when fitted out with uniforms, lost their awkwardness. Full equality was not finally felt until the baseball nine organized among the September plebes persistently defeated the nine of the May plebes. Buck was catcher on this nine and would not accept defeat.

"They have nearly twice the number to draw from, and have had a chance to practice all summer; but I don't believe they can keep on beating us." And he had a challenge ready for three games, the last three Saturdays of September.

He managed to get his nine out for more practice, finding some time after supper, a little time between the morning drill and dinner, and the pitcher and several others joined him in getting up a half hour before gun fire. They made him captain. He changed the men around. The first of the three games was won by the September plebes, and the May plebes seemed disheartened.

"It's no use," said Prett, the shortstop, "they are better players than we are. That's all there is to it."

"They made more errors than we did. They are no better than they were last week, while we have certainly improved. We'll beat them yet."

Buck's spirit spread through his nine, and they worked harder, even to the point of training in diet. The September nine rested on its oars, and the result was that the May nine won the next game thirteen to nine.

This roused the September plebes, who began practicing overtime, straining every nerve. The whole nine turned out an hour before gun fire the last three days. The May nine urged Buck to do the same.

"No, we'll go on steadily. They'll overdo it."

Excitement was high when the last game was called.

The enthusiasm had spread to the town, and both sides had their friends and rooters.

The September nine started out with brilliant playing, and at the fifth inning stood three to nothing. The sixth inning each made one. The seventh inning the Mays made another. The eighth inning the Mays made two and the Septembers one. The ninth inning began with the Septembers at the bat and five to four in their favor. They struck out and the Mays made one. The tenth inning neither scored. The eleventh inning the Septembers scored one, and the score stood six to five in their favor when the Mays came to the bat. The first two of the Mays fanned out. The Septembers felt confident. The next man made his first on balls.

"Steady, men! Their pitcher is fagged. He's not hardened, and he's been working too hard lately."

Buck's observation was correct.

The next batter took his base on being struck in the hip by the ball.

The excitement was at fever heat. It was Buck's turn at the bat. The crowd became nervous, and the players also.

"Jones doesn't seem to care," remarked an onlooker, as Buck was very slow and phlegmatic in finding his favorite bat.

The first was a ball. The next, Buck struck a powerful blow and missed. The next was a ball. Then another powerful blow that missed. The man on second had failed to get away.

"Steady!" said Buck to himself. "Am I making a mistake to try for more than a base hit? No, your strategy is right. Three men on bases would do no good, and one run would do no good. We must win."

There is a strength in such calm determination as

Buck's that seems to conquer nature's forces. He calmly let the next ball pass, then the next.

"He's afraid to try it," jeered a September rooter.

Buck's eye was on the pitcher. He seemed to know what the next ball was going to be before it left the pitcher's hand. Straight over the base with tremendous speed! Buck struck with all his might. A clear crack and the ball went as though shot from a cannon, on, on, on, till it struck in the big oak tree over center. A roar went up. Caps were tossed in the air. All the May men rushed to congratulate Buck as he came in on his home run. Pikeman only remained back. "Jones's luck again," he muttered to himself.

"I always felt that the May men were better than the September men," remarked Prett, the shortstop, as he swelled his chest with pride.

By the end of September, when the upper classes returned from leave, the plebes, even the September plebes, had become proficient in the drills and were ready to enter the battalion, though fifteen, mostly September plebes, were kept in the awkward squad to take extra setting-up exercises.

During leisure intervals many of the plebes took up studying early in September, and kept it up during the month. Preble urged Buck to do likewise.

Buck thought over the matter, but shook his head.

"Now is the time for baseball and drills. I'll take up studying when the time comes."

He regretted this decision the first day that studying began. In all three recitations, mathematics, English, and French, he made a bad showing; especially in French. He had never studied a word of French, and the method used required the committing of a French text to memory every day.

At gun fire that night he was utterly unprepared for the next day's recitation.

"It's absurd, Preble, to try to memorize and recite French when you don't know how to pronounce a word."

He and Preble had applied for the privilege of being roommates, and had been assigned to the first division, quartered at the Old Quarters. Their room was in Building Number Three, where the officer of the day for the Old Quarters had his office.

Preble pronounced the French words over for Buck, who struggled with them till taps; when he just got in bed as the officer of the day reached their floor and shouted: "Out lights! Turn in!"

When everything was quiet, and Preble was asleep, Buck slipped out of bed, tacked blankets over the window and transom, and put a heavy screen over the shade, then lighted the gas, and continued on the French lesson. In the midst of wrestling with the French words, he thought he heard footsteps outside, and instantly turned out the light. All seemed quiet, and after a while he lighted it again. His conscience began to trouble him.

"I know it's against regulations; but what can a man do when they don't give him time enough?" And he continued studying, though he took the precaution of changing the "In Charge of Room" plate from Preble's wardrobe over to his own.

He was going over for the fiftieth time the first sentence of the French text, when he was sure he heard footsteps in the hall below. He started to turn out the gas again. He felt like a criminal.

"I'll not do it. If they catch me, all right."

The steps came up the stairs and down the hall, and stopped for a moment in front of the door. Buck's heart was in his throat. A knock! The door opened. There

stood the officer of the day and the sentry, who had detected the light through the screened window. Buck rose to his feet as the officer of the day entered.

"What is your name?"

"Jones, B. P."

"Who is in charge of this room?"

"I am, sir."

"You are aware that you are violating regulations?"

"Yes, sir."

"I'll report you."

"Very well, sir. I deserve it."

"Take down those blankets. Turn out your light and turn in."

"Ay, ay, sir."

As he got in bed Buck murmured to himself: "I'm glad he caught me."

Preble had slept through it all, and when he heard Buck's name read out at breakfast formation for violation of regulations, studying after taps; also for neglect of regulations, having a light burning in room after taps, while in charge of room, he was astonished.

"It must be a mistake, for I was in charge of the room."

He dropped out of ranks to see the officer of the day.

"That report must be a mistake, sir."

"No, it is correct."

"I was in charge of the room."

"The 'In Charge of Room' plate was on Mr. Jones's wardrobe."

After marching out, Preble hurried over to Buck.

"Did he slip up on you in his stocking feet?"

"No, he caught me on the square. The sentry was with him. I heard them in the lower hall and on the stairway, and they stopped in front of the door."

"Why didn't you turn the light out and jump in bed and begin to snore?"

"I did turn it out once, but I felt too mean to do it again."

Preble loved Buck more than ever. And the officer-in-charge and the Commandant, who heard the circumstances from the officer of the day, lost none of their respect for him. Pikeman, however, went to Rix and Huff and Hutchins and Twinting and the other savey men of the class, saying: "You'll have to look out for Jones. He'll take any unfair advantage to try to stand ahead of you."

Buck never studied after taps again.

He began to investigate the total available time, and to take account of the relative importance of the studies, and to allot the available time accordingly. He worked out his programme to take advantage of every five minutes of extra time that could be seized in each day of the week.

Thus he caught ten minutes before breakfast, ten minutes after breakfast, before the call for the first period, twenty minutes before dinner, after the recall from the second period, about fifteen minutes after dinner, before the call for the afternoon period, about ten minutes before drill, about thirty minutes after drill and before supper, about twenty-five minutes after supper before study hours, and about twenty minutes between gun fire and taps. This made altogether over two hours additional time that he manufactured during the day. Huff undertook to put in all the available time, too. So did Rix and several others; but they lacked Buck's rigid system.

When the first monthly examinations came, he was satisfied with his French, was dissatisfied with his English, and utterly disgusted with his mathematics examinations, in which last case he lingered over the third

problem, as he had lingered on the entrance examination, so that he barely reached the fourth question, and did not touch the fifth.

After drill the following Saturday, all the plebes and upper classmen hurried to the old Recitation Hall to see the standing.

Some upper classmen, after seeing their marks, came over to the marks of the plebes. Stratford noticed Buck's look.

"Have you lost your last friend, Mr. Jones?"

"No, sir."

"How did you come out? I see—five in English; that's good; nine in French; so is that; twelve in math.; that, too. What do you expect? I have never been as high as twelve in anything."

But this did not comfort Buck. Moble came up.

"Ah, Mr. Jones, you look downcast. What's the matter?"

"Nothing, sir."

Once, when Moble had Buck in the washroom on the cruise, standing first himself, he asked him where he expected to stand. Buck had frankly told him, first. When Moble noticed Jones, B. P., number twelve in mathematics, he turned and asked: "Where do you expect to stand *now*, Mr. Jones?"

"First, sir."

Moble smiled. A twitter passed among the group. Pikeman laughed out loud. Buck said nothing further, but went on taking down Preble's marks. As he left, he saw Preble coming up the walk. He ran ahead, his face lighting up.

"My congratulations! It's fine. You pulled the first section in math." It was on mathematics that Preble had failed the previous year, and he smiled with satisfaction.

"And where are you, Buck?"

"In the middle of the second section. I went to pieces on the exam, as I told you."

Preble's face fell. He knew what this meant to Buck.

"You ought to have studied on Sunday; especially last Sunday. The math exams always come on Monday. Everybody else studies then. There is no other time."

Buck shook his head. He had never studied on Sunday at home, and he determined not to study on Sunday at Annapolis. Instead, he would take a long walk across Spar Creek, or over the Government Farm, or out across the Severn on the road to Whitehall. On Sunday nights he would read religious books. At times this was very hard, especially when the great annual and semiannual examinations came. But Buck never deviated from his resolution.

"I'll try to make up on Saturdays and holidays," he would repeat to himself.

"You'll be out at the game this afternoon?" asked Preble.

"The second half," replied Buck.

It was to be a great football game; the first game between Princeton and Annapolis.

Buck's front room in Building Three looked out over the football field, but during the first half of the game Buck's back was turned, and he studied the French lesson for Monday. At times when the shouting went up, it was hard, very hard, but he concentrated his mind only the more, and never turned till 3.45, when the time he fixed arrived. Then he went out and followed the game with breathless interest, running up and down the side lines with the small boys.

Princeton had scored twelve in the first half, and now made another touchdown and goal in the first five min-

utes. Their heavy left guard had disabled the Navy right guard and substitute in succession, and was running over the second substitute, who was left stretched out on the field when the touchdown was made.

Time was called, and Stone, the captain of the Navy team, called up Kister, the captain of the Hustlers, the Navy second team.

"Kister, can you suggest a man?"

"There is no man on the Hustlers that can stand up before that bull."

"Who have played right guard for you?"

Kister called over several names, but shook his head. Then a thought came up.

"There's young Jones, the plebe. He's hard as a knot and plucky as the devil. But he only plays now and then, and refuses to join the Hustlers. There he is."

"Mr. Jones," called out Stone, "come here!"

Buck came up.

"Cribbin, their left guard, has laid out three of our men."

"Yes, sir. I watched him, the brute; he does it with his elbow," replied Buck.

"Do you think you could hold him?"

"I'll try, if you wish."

Buck was in football uniform in short order and took his place. The Navy kicked and Princeton got the ball. Buck caught Cribbin's vicious eye as he lined up in front of him. The ball was snapped, and like a flash Cribbin's elbow caught him in the throat. Buck thought his windpipe had been broken, but he caught the Princeton half back with the ball as he tried to pass through.

"One more will be enough," chuckled Cribbin to the half back.

The teams lined up again. The ball was snapped.

Cribbin lunged with his elbow. Buck ducked low, the elbow passed over, and he caught Cribbin in the body with his head. The half back piled on top. Cribbin was getting his breath when Poe, the Princeton captain, came up.

"What's the matter, Cribbin?"

"That little devil dodged and caught me in the wind."

"We'd better try something else?"

"No, I'll get him this time; then we'll walk over them."

They lined up.

"Second down and four yards to make."

Buck watched Cribbin's eye. The look he caught reminded him of the look of the snaggle-tooth assassin at Portsmouth. The ball was snapped to time with Cribbin's lunge. The rest of the Navy team was taken by surprise, but Buck was not. He looked for just what came—a lower lunge. He jumped back a half pace, knocked Cribbin's elbow down with his right fist, and made a counter lunge with his left elbow, caught Cribbin square in the neck, and disengaged in time to down the half back as he tried to pass over. A shout went up that echoed over the bay.

"Third down. Navy's ball."

The whistle called time. Cribbin was stretched out.

"Come ahead, old man."

Cribbin shook his head. They took him off the field.

A substitute came up. The Navy snapped. Buck lunged with his elbow and caught the new man in the neck. He staggered as he stood up again.

"Second down. Two yards to gain."

Buck had a consultation with Stone. The navy snapped, Buck made the elbow lunge, caught the substitute in the neck and went down with him, while Stone passed over for a gain of eight yards. Cheer after cheer

went up, and a Navy song broke forth; but the whistle called time. The substitute was taken off the field, and another came in his place. He fell back as Buck lunged, and hit Buck with his fist a smashing blow between the eyes. He was ruled off, and a groan went up from the stands.

"Princeton is a coward!"

"Princeton is a coward!"

"Princeton can't take its own medicine!"

Everybody was astonished when Buck took his place, and a third substitute stood up. The first lunge, Buck caught him in the neck, and the Navy passed over for a gain of five yards. The next lunge he missed. The next he caught him in the neck, and the substitute was taken from the field, while the Navy had reached Princeton's twenty-yard line. Buck went up to Stone:

"How many of our men did Cribbin lay off?"

"Four."

"Then we are quits."

"No; we'll keep it up for this touchdown."

Buck shook his head. "We don't want a game to come this way."

Everybody was astonished that the Navy suddenly stopped the play that was gaining so much. The two teams struggled back and forth. The time was nearly up. An opening came and Buck kicked a drop kick for a goal from the field. The shouting rent the skies. Time was called. Everybody rushed in, but Buck had slipped off.

"Stone, why didn't you keep up your play after Jones got on to Cribbin's stunt so well?"

"Jones refused to go on after he had laid out as many as Cribbin laid out."

Buck hurried back to his room, tied a towel with

cracked ice over his forehead, where a lump was rising, and got in an hour's study on his mathematics before the bugle blew for supper.

Buck carried out his self-imposed routine during the second month, and used better judgment on the examinations. When the marks were posted, Huff was again first in everything with a big lead. Rix was second in mathematics and in English, and third in French. Buck was fifth in mathematics, fourth in English, and fifth in French. He felt some satisfaction in going up in everything, and his general average made him third in the class, but Rix was well ahead, and Huff was out of sight. But he held to his rigid *régime*, which was beginning to make him appear very serious and almost stern.

Thanksgiving, however, he gave himself all the day after two o'clock. He enjoyed the sports immensely and, though having had no special practice, won the mile heat with a good record. After the sports he said:

"Preble, I feel like a spree. Let's go out to Wiegard's."

They went out and ate ice cream and cake.

"My mother sent me a spread," said Preble.

"Then we'll get it," said Buck.

But they found the express office closed. They looked up the expressman at home.

"Please come out and let us have the box."

They pleaded in vain.

"I'm going to get it and take it, if you don't come on," cried Buck. "This is the only day we'll have." And under the threat the agent went down and gave them the big box. They took turns in carrying it to their quarters, and a string of classmates gathered as they went.

"Come on," said Buck to everyone. "Preble's got

the biggest spread I ever saw. I invite you all to come and help us eat it."

All accepted Buck's invitation, while Preble roared with laughter to see the boy in Buck breaking out all over in reaction from the rigid *régime* he had been going through.

Nearly half the class was gathered in their room after supper enjoying the great spread, and the fun became so uproarious that the officer of the day came up about nine o'clock, thinking that they were drinking; but found no evidence of liquor.

A little while later, just after gun fire, Stratford appeared in the doorway. All the plebes stood up at attention.

"Prepare to dive for Casey. Mr. Jones and Mr. Billerson, take the basins; Mr. Catell and Mr. Knowlton, take the outboard wardrobe; Mr. Prett and Mr. Mortel, take the inboard wardrobe; Mr. Prowhoska, Mr. Kirck, Mr. Ferbier, and Mr. Dinforth, take the inboard bed; Mr. Tyrone, Mr. Stiger, Mr. Thimes, and Mr. Henderson, take the outboard bed; the others, not provided for, take the table. Take your stations!"

They all took their assigned stations. Buck filled his basin full of water and stood over it.

"Are you ready?"

All were on the tiptoe of expectancy. Buck couldn't restrain the fun bubbling up.

"Mr. Stratford, we'll all agree to make the best dive you ever saw, if you'll promise not to eat up all the spread before we come up."

A snicker went through the plebes.

"Jones has a nerve," whispered Catell to Knowlton. Stratford stamped his foot.

"Come here, Mr. Jones!" he said savagely.

Buck came up.

"Are you trying to be gally?"

"No, sir," replied Buck respectfully.

"Then take your station!"

"Stand by—dive!"

Such scrambling had never been witnessed before; under the beds and tables, into the wardrobes they went; hands and legs were shuffling. Stratford was bursting with delight, but kept a solemn look.

Buck soused his head in the basin, and worked his arms frantically; then rose, and soused again, then rose and spluttered out:

"I've got him, sir!"

This was a variation, but Stratford seized upon it.

"Have the rest of you got him?"

"I've got him, sir!" answered Billerson.

"I've got him, sir!" "I've got him, sir!" "I've got him, sir!" they all answered.

"Then bring him up!" ordered Stratford.

As they came up from all directions, holding their left hands out and pawing the air with their right hands, Stratford could restrain himself no longer, but broke out and bent over double with roaring laughter, and took no exception when all the plebes broke forth, also unable to restrain themselves.

At that moment the warning bugle blew, and away the group scattered. Many had to get up to the New Quarters and in bed in five minutes, and they flew. Those rooming in the same building took it more leisurely. They were well practiced in going to bed, and could do it in two and a half minutes.

Buck's spirits were at the highest pitch. An inspiration seized him.

"Fellows," he said to the last four who lingered,

"come in after everything is quiet, and we'll go on with the spread."

About 10.30 they slipped in: Knowlton, Billerson, Henderson, and Kirck. Buck and Preble turned out, and the six went ahead on the good things, by the dim light from the corridor that came in through the open door.

"This is a wonderful turkey, Preble."

"Yes, wonderful, and these tarts your mother made," put in Buck.

They had been eating the same things all evening, but a new relish came with the clandestine circumstances.

Soon they became bold and raised their voices and clamored for more light.

"Let's fix up the window and transom and light the gas," suggested Knowlton.

"We'd better put the blankets double over the window," said Buck, remembering his former experience.

When everything was snug, they lit the gas and went ahead with the spread, having the time of their lives, Buck outdoing himself with his fun. He was just beginning to tell a ghost story Casey had told him at sea, when he stopped suddenly.

"I hear footsteps," he said in a low voice.

"It's a ghost," suggested Billerson.

"I wish it *were* a ghost," replied Buck, as the steps grew louder.

"Fellows, it's the sentry. He's on to our light. He's going for the officer of the day."

The guilty six were just about to scatter.

"It's too late, fellows; he's on the stairway." Buck knew the steps only too well. "Billerson, you and Kirck get in my wardrobe. Knowlton, you and Henderson get in Preble's wardrobe. Preble, you jump into bed, and begin to snore. Quick! It's a real case of dive for Casey."

All obeyed, thinking that Buck would turn out the light and jump into bed. Instead, Buck quickly changed the "In Charge of Room" plate from Preble's wardrobe over to his own, and jumped back and stood over the box eating a big slice of pie as a knock came and the door opened, and the officer of the day and the sentry stepped in. Buck put down the pie and stood at attention; but chewed fast, as though caught with a big mouthful.

"This is Mr. Jones?"

"Yes, sir," Buck answered with difficulty, as he finally gulped the pie down.

"Who's in charge of this room?"

"I am, sir."

The officer of the day glanced up to verify the plate on the wardrobe.

"You are rather greedy, eating by yourself."

"I have a bigger capacity than my roommate."

The officer glared at this retort, but resumed with cutting sarcasm:

"There is more than is good for you. I think you've had enough. I'll confiscate the rest. Orderly, gather up the things."

Buck was overwhelmed as the orderly began to gather the good things up into the box. He didn't know that confiscation of the goods was the penalty for clandestine use.

"Please don't, sir. They belong to my roommate."

He pleaded in vain.

"Your roommate should have been more discreet in trusting his goods," the answer came, as the orderly was putting the last things in.

The officer was morally certain that the snores coming from the bed were unnaturally loud.

"Take the box to my office."

And the orderly went out with the box.

Buck's wrath was running high.

"Take down those blankets, Mr. Jones; turn out your light and turn in," ordered the officer as he withdrew.

Buck couldn't contain himself.

"Please help yourself. The things are good, and I am sure my roommate would wish you welcome," he said with sarcasm.

The officer stepped back into the room.

"What do you mean, sir?" he demanded of Buck.

Buck said nothing, and the officer of the day went out, looking black with rage.

Preble jumped up.

"Buck, what in the world possessed you! You are ruined! Higbrath is the meanest stinker in the Academy!"

The others came out of hiding in consternation.

"He ought not to have taken *your* spread," said Buck between his teeth, as he turned out the light. "Come close. I'm going to get that spread back."

The six conspirators held their heads close, as Buck developed his plans, and gave each his instructions.

"Ask no questions. Simply obey instructions. We'll all get out of the window. Henderson, take your station on the upper floor of Building Number Two. Kirck, on the upper floor of Building Number One. Billerson, take your station behind the Institute Building. Knowlton, take station under the willow tree behind the Steam Building. Preble, take station at the corner of this building. At exactly ten minutes after six bells, Knowlton will call out 'Fire! fire!' and then hide behind the old boat shed, climbing up into the Sandwich Island boat, if necessary. When Billerson hears Knowlton's call, he will likewise call 'Fire! fire!' then slip down the terrace and hide be-

hind the Photographic Building. When Preble hears Bil-
lerson's call, he will pull his cap over his eyes and rush by
the door, calling out 'Fire! fire!' and will turn around
the Old Recitation Hall and hide. When Henderson and
Kirck hear Preble, they will rush pell-mell down the
stairs, calling out, 'Fire! fire at the Steam Building—fire
at the Steam Building!' and will rush by this building,
keeping up the call. They likewise will drop behind the
Old Recitation Hall and hide. When the fire engine is
out and everybody is off, we'll all assemble on the top floor
of the Old Recitation Hall and go ahead with the spread."

They were all electrified.

Just at that moment six bells were sounded.

"It is time to be off. Knowlton, make your call five
minutes after you reach your station. Here are matches."
Buck pulled a bundle of them out of the table drawer.
"Each man take a box, but use them only when necessary.
And look out for the watchmen. If you run across one,
pull your cap over your eyes and fly; but lead the pursuer
astray."

Buck questioned each to see if he thoroughly under-
stood his part, then raised the window guiltily to see
about the watchman who had struck six bells with the bell
in front of Building Number Five.

"He's gone. The way is clear."

Buck led the way out of the window and dropped down
on the sidewalk. The others followed.

"Bend over passing the lamp posts," whispered Buck
as they parted.

CHAPTER XVI

BUCK EATS HIS CAKE AND PAYS THE PRICE

IT was a dark night, well suited to the scheme. Buck slipped around the building, then along the rear to Building Number Four, then on to Building Number Five. Then he passed close to the side of the building and slipped across the sidewalk to the little belfry, stood close up to one of the columns, and waited.

He began to feel a little anxious as the minutes passed. The darkness seemed heavy and mysterious. He felt queer. But his blood was up, and he repeated to himself, "I'll get that spread at any cost."

At last—it seemed a half hour, at least—the stillness was broken by a loud cry of "Fire! fire!" A pause—then another cry—"Fire! fire!" Then a man rushed by—"Fire! fire at the Steam Building!"

Buck seized the bell and rang furiously; then paused, and struck three bells; then rang furiously, and paused, and three bells, the signal for fire in the Steam Building.

He heard a tumult in Buildings One and Two, and two men rushed out yelling—"Fire! fire in the Steam Building!"

"It's working like a charm," murmured Buck as he rang furiously.

Suddenly looking around, he saw the watchman running toward the bell, not thirty yards away. Buck drew his cap down and dashed across the sidewalk to the rear

of the building and turned the corner to the right, as he saw the watchman coming on in pursuit. This watchman had caught many a fugitive cadet; but he lost ground as Buck dashed toward the *Santee's* wharf and turned up around the gas house by the gymnasium, and doubled back on his tracks, as he saw the watchman running down the *Santee's* wharf. He slipped along the rear of the buildings, then out from behind Building Number Three, where he paused and looked cautiously down the walk. The last straggler was running toward the Old Recitation Hall.

"It's time. I'll take my chances."

And he dashed under the light into the building, into the office of the officer of the day. There was the box. He grabbed it up and shouldered it. As he reached the door he saw a watchman running toward him from the Superintendent's house; so he started down toward the gymnasium, then turned behind Building Number Five, and doubled back behind the buildings toward the Old Recitation Hall.

The second watchman rushed by and seized the first watchman, who was returning from his vain search of the *Santee's* wharf, each watchman threw his bull's-eye light in the face of the other.

"Did you see a cadet with a box?"

"No."

"Something is wrong here."

Buck proceeded cautiously, but swiftly. The engine was rattling along the road near the sea wall, with the sparks flying. The hose cart dashed by it. Buck climbed the rear steps, then cautiously slipped around and into the Old Recitation Hall and climbed to the top floor, breathing deep from his load. He made a low whistle.

"Here we are."

Buck recognized Knowlton's voice, and groped his way to the group, and deposited the box on the floor.

"We thought you weren't coming."

"I told them you would get here some way."

"I'd have been frightened to death any other time, for I know this old building is haunted."

Buck paid but little heed to these remarks.

"Have you mustered?"

"Yes, all are present."

Buck examined the hall.

"Come on this way."

And they went over to the corner where a light would not show.

Buck struck a match and began to take the good things out.

He bit a big half moon from a tart.

"I never knew anything so sweet!"

The others took pie and cake, chocolate caramels and turkey.

"This is the greatest spread I ever saw!"

"Isn't this great?"

"They are hauling on the drag ropes and hose out there."

All laughed.

Each in turn struck a match. It was a chilly night, and their teeth were chattering, but each testified that he had never known anything to taste so good. The turkey was the best ever! The ham came in for high praise. They even tried the stuffed hard-boiled eggs that had been neglected to that point. Each was wondering if he could get back all right, but no one intimated the least anxiety. All waited on Buck, who continued to stuff himself.

When the alarm was sounded the officer of the day hastened over to join the Commandant. When they reached

the Steam Building, the hook and ladder squad were already there, but were at a loss where to operate. The Commandant went all around the building. No sign of fire! The Superintendent, accompanied by the four-striper, his aide in fire quarters, came up.

"There is no trace of fire, sir," Carrington reported.

The watchman for the Steam Building and *Phlox's* wharf came up.

"I have been right here, sir, and have seen no sign of fire."

"Have the building inspected," directed Rumsey.

And the watchman and four-striper went in and soon returned.

"No trace of fire, sir."

"This is very strange, Captain," said Carrington, as he questioned the watchman.

"Who sounded the first alarm?"

"I don't know, sir. It was from over there on the terrace. I ran around and thought I saw a cadet slip behind that willow, but when I examined, there was no one there."

At that moment another watchman came up.

"I heard fire called over here, then repeated about the Institute Building, and I ran to sound the bell at the Old Quarters and found a cadet ringing it, with other cadets rushing up the walk giving the alarm. As I came up the cadet at the bell fled, and I chased him as far as the *Santee's* wharf, where he slipped me."

"It is a conspiracy, Captain," said Carrington, as he turned to Rumsey, who remained silent a moment, then replied:

"I think you are right. Sound the retreat from fire quarters. Then assemble the battalion. Unless the guilty confess, march the battalion at double quick up and down

Maryland Avenue for an hour, and we'll issue an order for a court of inquiry in the morning."

Rumsey's voice was clear and stern.

The six conspirators had been eating all afternoon and evening, but they all professed to have a prodigious appetite. Billerson was getting nauseated, and others were not eating as much as they pretended. But Buck kept stuffing by the match lights.

"There goes the retreat. They've extinguished the raging fire at last," said Buck as he took up another pie, while all grinned and laughed and shivered.

"Are all those tarts gone?" asked Buck, as he began to search down in the tart corner.

At that moment they heard the bugle call the assembly.

Buck stopped short.

"They are going to muster and catch us," said Kirck with trembling voice.

"Let's be off."

"Let's hurry."

"A moment," said Buck sternly. "Continue to obey instructions, and you'll come out all right. But first look out for the spread. This is the last chance. Let's take away as much as we can."

And he began shoving drumsticks in his trousers pockets, and potted ham; and got three sardine boxes in his blouse.

The steps of the cadets going to formation were heard outside. Panic seized the other conspirators. Billerson grabbed up a pie and put it, flat, soft side to body, under his blouse. Henderson filled his trousers pockets with cocoanut cake. Even Preble lost his nerve, and began crowding molasses candy in his hip pocket.

"Come now; steady!" whispered Buck, as he led the way.

Knowlton stumbled at the head of the stairs, and fell forward against Kirck, and Kirck unfooted Billerson, and the whole group began tumbling down the stairs. Buck braced himself against the banister, and blocked the avalanche.

"They must have heard us. We are lost!" quailed Kirck.

"Steady!" said Buck as they regained their feet. And he led them to the ground floor.

"It won't do to go out of the door. We must drop from the rear. It's pretty high; but bend your knees as you strike the ground, and it will be all right."

And he led the way, groping through the recitation room, opened the rear window stealthily, swung out from the sill, and dropped to the ground. It was higher than he thought.

"Put your feet on my hands and lean in against the side; now on my shoulders. Steady!"—and he helped the next one down; then the others.

Buck led the way around to the foot of the steps.

"Let's run," said one.

"No; stay with me," replied Buck.

The gas house hose squad was coming up.

"Preble, Billerson, and Kirck, run up from the rear and join them."

They obeyed, and glided into the squad unnoticed.

The engine squad soon followed.

"Go ahead, Knowlton, you and Henderson; I'll follow."

Soon they were absorbed unnoticed in the squad, and all reached formation in the corridor, and answered muster. At last they breathed easy.

Hunt, the four-striper, read an order from the Superintendent, calling on the instigator of the false alarm to

own up; otherwise, the whole battalion would be marched double quick for one hour up and down Maryland Avenue.

Five of the conspirators trembled. Buck never turned a hair.

"Will the instigator step forward?"

Buck, who was in the rear, shouldered the front rank man out of place and stepped out.

"I am the instigator."

"What name?"

"Jones, B. P."

"Report to the officer in charge."

Buck marched half the length of the battalion, around the right and into the office of the officer in charge, where Rumsey, Carrington, and Winewraight were looking over the conduct report. Buck felt his blood run cold.

"I was directed to report to you, sir," he said to Winewraight as he saluted.

All three looked up astonished.

"What for?" asked Winewraight.

"I am the instigator."

"Mr. Jones reports that he was the instigator," said Winewraight to Carrington.

Carrington had become fond of Buck on the cruise, as had all the officers, and he remained silent, visibly affected. Rumsey broke the silence with calm, impersonal accents that cut like a sword. Rumsey was a rigid disciplinarian; a disciplinarian first, a man afterwards.

"You say that you instigated the false fire alarm, Mr. Jones?"

Buck felt his heart rise in his throat, but he answered without any visible sign of emotion.

"Yes, sir."

"You are under arrest."

The words seemed to strike Buck in the face. His temples throbbed; but he stirred not a muscle.

"Orderly, direct the corporal of the guard to report here with three marines under arms."

The orderly saluted and was off, and the three officers turned again to the conduct report.

The blood rushed to Buck's cheeks. His heart pounded against his chest. Strange, conflicting emotions surged over him. He could have died at the stake, without wincing, for a noble cause. But now he felt a sense of guilt and shame, that multiplied tenfold the torture. "Under arrest; under arrest," he kept repeating to himself.

The corporal arrived with his guard with fixed bayonets.

"Corporal of the guard, that is your prisoner." Rumsey pointed at Buck. "Conduct him to the *Santee*, and direct the commanding officer, with my compliments, to place him in solitary confinement on bread and water until further notice."

"Ay, ay, sir," said the corporal, saluting. He then turned to Buck.

"Prisoner, about face—forward, march! Guard, forward, march!"

All night Buck tossed in his prison bunk with nightmares—a fugitive from justice; pursued over land and sea. Once he saw his father and mother, but he was ashamed to show his face, and fled on.

The pies, tarts, and turkey, the jam, ham, and cakes and candies raised rebellion within. Pursued to the end of the earth, he was captured and ordered to be shot. The execution was at hand. He looked into the muzzles of the leveled rifles. "O God! If I were only not guilty!" The volley flashed. Pains darted through his body. He

awakened, doubled up with cramps, the cold sweat standing out on his forehead. Echoes were still reverberating. It was the morning gun.

"I know what it must be like in hell. It's the guilt that torments."

He got up and rubbed his stomach, and leaned on the edge of the bunk to ease the pain, and began to analyze the degree of his guilt, when the master-at-arms came down and directed the sentry on guard to conduct his prisoner to breakfast formation.

The officer in charge halted them on the left as the battalion formed. The blood came to Buck's cheeks as he knew that everybody saw him under the guard. Buck noticed the officer in charge stop in front of Billerson:

"Report, Mr. Billerson, for spot on blouse. That's the biggest spot I ever saw on a blouse, Mr. Billerson."

It was exactly the size of a pie.

Finally, Buck heard Hunt read:

"Jones, B. P., neglect of regulations; having light in room after taps, while in charge of room.

"Same, violation of regulations; sitting up after taps.

"Same, disobedience of orders, in not removing blankets from window, and turning in, as ordered by the officer of the day.

"Same, insubordination; using disrespectful and insubordinate language to the officer of the day.

"Same, conduct unbecoming a naval officer and a gentleman; purloining an object from the desk of the officer of the day.

"Same, conspiracy to the prejudice of good order and discipline, in sounding a false fire alarm."

A suppressed murmur passed along the battalion. Jo-Jo and his gang gloated, and Pikeman felt the deepest joy of his life.

Buck did not hear the rest of the report. He scarcely heard the last charge as he kept repeating, "conduct unbecoming a naval officer and a gentleman," "purloining," "purloining." All the other charges, grave as they were, drifted to the background.

"It's an insult!"

Buck followed behind the battalion as it marched in to breakfast. Higbrath, having been relieved, came out of the officer-in-charge's office, as Buck passed. The sight of him stirred the elemental passions in Buck's breast.

"I dare you to say the same thing now that you are off duty," he said in a low voice.

Higbrath's smile of satisfaction looked devilish.

"You're a miserable coward!" Buck muttered between his teeth.

During breakfast, Buck noticed how Pikeman and Ninman gloated over the situation.

When the battalion rose from breakfast, the four-striper called out:

"Jones, B. P., will report to the Commandant."

Buck found Carrington looking very serious.

"Take a seat, Mr. Jones.—You had a light burning after taps?"

"Yes, sir."

Carrington reached over and checked off the first report.

"You were up?"

"Yes, sir."

He checked off the next.

"You failed to turn in after being ordered to do so?"

"Yes, sir."

He checked off the third.

"What language did you use to the officer of the day?"

"I told him to help himself to the spread he took away."

"Why did you speak such words?"

"Because he spoke similar words to me; told me I was selfish eating alone, and had had enough."

Carrington put a question mark after this report.

"Did you purloin an object from his desk?"

"No, sir!" Buck rose to his feet as he spoke. "I took back the spread that belonged to my roommate."

"Did he see you do it?"

"No, sir."

At this juncture the officer-in-charge entered.

"Here is a supplemental report Mr. Higbrath asks to add, as officer of the day yesterday."

Carrington read it out loud.

"Jones, B. P., *mutiny*; threatening his superior officer, while in the discharge of the duties of his office."

"What did you say to him, Mr. Jones?"

Carrington's face, which had begun to light up, now took on a terrible sternness.

"I dared him to say off duty that I 'purloined.' And when he only smiled, I called him a miserable coward."

Buck's face flushed and his fists began to clench unconsciously.

"When was this?"

"As I followed the battalion in to breakfast."

Carrington pressed the button over his table. The orderly appeared.

"Orderly, ask the officer-in-charge to send Mr. Higbrath here."

Soon Higbrath came in, showing a fiendish delight as he saw Buck at the bar and Carrington looking so serious.

"I notice your supplemental report says Mr. Jones threatened you while in the performance of your duty. When did he threaten you?"

"On the way to breakfast."

"Had you been relieved as officer of the day?"

"Yes, sir. But I meant that he threatened me for having performed my duty as officer of the day."

"For reporting him for purloining?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did he purloin?"

"A spread."

"Did you see him take it?"

"Does he deny it?" asked Higbrath vehemently.

"Simply answer my questions, Mr. Higbrath. Did you see him?"

"No, sir."

"Do you know of anyone who did see him?"

"No, sir. But I am morally certain of it," stammered Higbrath.

"How so?"

"It was on my table when the fire alarm sounded, and when I came back it was gone."

"Is that all the evidence you have for making such a serious report?"

"Yes, sir."

"That is all."

As Higbrath went out Carrington took up a pen and scratched out the report for purloining. Buck's heart leaped with delight. It didn't matter about the other reports now. In gratitude toward Carrington he was ready to confess everything.

"You confess that you sounded the false fire alarm?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why did you do it?"

"To get the officer of the day out of his office so I could get the spread."

"Did you realize that the whole Academy would be roused out of sleep?"

"Yes, sir. But I couldn't see any other way of getting the spread."

"Why did you want the spread so much?"

"Because I didn't think he had a right to take it. I told him it belonged to my roommate."

"Under the regulations, anything found in clandestine use is confiscated, irrespective of its ownership."

"I didn't know that, sir."

"Who were your accomplices in the fire alarm?"

"I must ask you to excuse me from telling."

"Do you realize that in trials a witness is required to tell the whole truth?"

"Yes, sir. On the stand, under oath, I should have to tell. But I don't think I ought to in this case, for I was altogether to blame. I thought of it, planned it, and led the others into it." Buck's voice began to plead. "They are all good men and would never have dreamed of doing such a thing, but for me. You can be sure they would never repeat it."

Carrington did not press the matter.

"One more question, Mr. Jones. Mr. Higbrath reported to the officer-in-charge that he thought there was drinking going on in your room."

"No, sir!" said Buck indignantly. "There was not a drop of liquor. We were only having fun. I was the most boisterous one of all. I haven't had much of a chance for fun lately, and I overdid it."

"You can go to your recitation, Mr. Jones. Further instructions will follow."

Buck went to his mathematics, and Carrington went over to see the Superintendent.

Buck was in the midst of a problem at the blackboard when the Commandant's orderly appeared at the door and saluted the instructor.

"A message from the Commandant to Mr. Jones, sir. He directs that Mr. Jones need not return to the *Santee*."

Buck had never felt such relief in his life. And his delight was undiminished even when he found on the posted conduct report, three demerits for neglect of regulations; five for violation of regulations; seven for disobedience of orders; and twenty-five for conduct to the prejudice of good order and discipline; forty demerits in all, that kept him in the fourth conduct grade for three months.

"That's a pile to get in one day. I'd like to take half of them."

"It's all right, Preble. I have no complaint. Carrington and Rumsey are square."

To his father Buck wrote that he was very sorry to get so many demerits. "I was on the prison ship one night. But it wasn't for anything mean. We were having fun on Thanksgiving, and I went too far. I think hereafter I'll know better where fun ends." "I deserved all the demerits. The authorities were absolutely just," he added in a postscript.

On the way from drill, Buck spied Billerson.

"Eh, there, Billerson! How big is that spot on your blouse?"

"If you call that a big spot, you ought to see the spot on my vest and shirt. I had a pie bath."

When Buck remained after church for the Chaplain's Bible class, as usual, Pikeman beckoned back over his shoulder with his thumb, as he passed out in the throng, and said in a loud voice to Ninman:

"Did you ever see such a hypocrite? And the nerve! He goes to Sunday school and to the Y. M. C. A.; but he gets caught out after taps, sounding fire alarms, and the like. He's got the devil in him."

During the month of December Buck carried out rigidly his self-imposed routine. He made good progress in French, but in giving so much time to it, he realized that he was neglecting mathematics and English; particularly the former. So when Christmas came, with the examination in mathematics set for the next day, he allowed himself only one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon, during which he took a brisk walk, and thought about all the dear ones at home. These thoughts brought the tears to his eyes, and the old, clamoring homesick feeling in his breast. But he ground his teeth together, and was only the more careful to get back to his room, ready to continue work when the hour was up, and to concentrate his mind so as not to be disturbed by the sounds of the others in their frolicking.

When he turned in his papers at the close of the examination next day, he felt a deep sense of satisfaction; felt that he had actually done himself justice for the first time.

"I'm glad I didn't take Christmas off."

After Saturday-morning drill the cadets hurried to the Old Recitation Hall to see the marks. As Buck came up, Preble rushed out.

"Buck, you knocked a four; a cold four, on the math exam."

An architect has pride in the sight of a great structure, the offspring of his mind; a conqueror has pride in the map of an empire he has built; but the full depth of human pride is only sounded by a naval cadet who looks

at the bulletin board that shows he has "knocked a four" on an examination.

Buck felt the depths were in commotion; but his brows lowered as he asked:

"Who stood one, Preble?"

"Huff stood one because he had such good weeklies. But he only made 3.7 on the exam."

This was no consolation to Buck. Those who noticed him looking over the heads of the throng around the bulletin boards wondered why he was not laughing and smiling, for he was second in mathematics, third in English, and fourth in French. But instead of smiling, he had a stolid, set look on his face, which made Huff and Rix feel nervous, though, thus far, both had a long lead, and Huff was practically out of sight of all competitors.

January was the general review month, and the "weeklies" counted for the month's work. Huff and Rix were again ahead of Buck with a large lead. It was an impossibility for Buck to equal them in weeklies, when he had to give so much time to French. But he realized that he might make up some of the difference at least, if he could be sure of mastery of the subjects so as to make the best examinations.

The great semiannual examinations were at hand. The mathematics examination was to be the first, set for Monday. Buck did his utmost, but when taps came Saturday night, he felt he was far from ready.

"Shall I turn out after everything is quiet?" he asked himself.

"No; I don't quite like it. It's against regulations. Then I must study to-morrow, like everybody else," and he began to reason over with himself the question of studying on Sunday.

For probably an hour Buck wrestled. He not only

longed to stand first like the others, but he had made up his mind to stand first, and he felt that the great thing he needed was time. A whole day, each week. What an advantage it would be! And then with this additional time, he could allow himself to go on the teams, and the baseball nine and the crew. The thought of giving up the baseball nine and the crew almost broke his heart. He went over the whole ground. His boy nature joined with his ambition to plead for studying on Sunday. But in vain.

"I haven't studied on Sunday before, and I'll not study now. And I'll stand one." And having made his final decision, Buck dropped off to sleep.

Every department of life has its times of tragedy. The semiannual and annual examinations are the tragic times at Annapolis. Nineteen of Buck's classmates were bilged at this first semiannual, many of them promising and ambitious, on whom the family pride was centered. Gust, who had stood first on the entrance examinations, and many others, considered bright at home, were among the number.

Oh, the tragedy of the cadet who is hovering over a 2.5, and in the semiannual finds one terrible question after another beyond his grasp! Oh, the tragedy of seeing the cold, pitiless marks on the bulletin, and being directed to send in his resignation!

Buck passed the best examination. But Huff and Rix were close behind and their higher marks on the weeklies kept them far ahead for the term as a whole. So Buck entered upon the second term with but gloomy prospects of ever overtaking Huff and Rix; but he applied himself with an even more rigid observance of his routine.

As the spring began to approach it became harder and

harder to give over to studies the short respite during the day; particularly the time after drill, and before supper, when all the others went out for tennis, baseball, or rowing. As a partial compensation, he took great interest in the drills, and learned to get good sport out of them; especially the field artillery, where his animal spirits leaped high. Stationed at the end of a drag rope, he would picture, as the battery dashed across the field, that an enemy was holding the position ahead. He was keen on the infantry drills, too; especially when blank cartridges were issued, and a sham battle was fought. He loved to be on the skirmish line and get the order to rally, and imagine that cavalry was charging them.

Even during the winter months, when the drills were indoors, he brought himself to enjoy them; particularly gymnastics. After a few lessons in boxing, he succeeded in landing a good blow on the boxing master's jaw.

"Come down after supper, Mr. Jones, and take special lessons. I'll make you the best boxer in the academy."

But Buck declined. He had mapped that time out for extra study of French and Spanish, the latter study having been taken up, elective by the first two sections in French.

When the drill was dancing, Buck took the same keen interest, and became proficient; though he said to himself, "I shall probably never go to a hop."

Even in the rigging loft, where the drill is considered stupid, Buck was all interest, and frequently surprised the instructor by tying difficult knots before they had been taught.

"Where did you learn that, Mr. Jones?"

"Casey taught me on the cruise, sir."

Thus the second term wore on, full of hard work.

CHAPTER XVII

BUCK AGAIN ENTERS THE RING

FEBRUARY and March passed. Huff and Rix still stood ahead, but Buck's rigid system of study was making itself felt. He pulled up a number and forged ahead of Rix in French; so in April he decided he'd give a little more time to mathematics. Huff and Rix never ceased to put forth their utmost exertions; but the warm spring weather seemed to pull down heavily. They were dismayed at the end of the month to find that Buck stood first in mathematics, having again made a four on the examination; while he stood second in English, and held his third place in French and third in Spanish.

May was probably the hardest month of all for Buck. It was so bright and alluring; at times he felt as though he *must* put down his books, especially on Saturday afternoon, and go out and play ball and row with the crew. But he held himself rigidly to his self-appointed routine.

He had developed into a remarkable shot, both with the pistol and the rifle, and was urged to put in more time. He wanted to become the best shot in the Academy, but decided that he had made up his mind to stand first, and that he would adhere to his *régime* until then. So he only dropped by the pistol gallery and the rifle range about twenty minutes out of the hour allotted to recreation Saturday afternoon.

There is no doubt that Buck derived a great deal of

recreation and a good deal of sport out of the drills and exercises, and a good deal of fun, even out of the hazing and running, though he was usually the worst victim of all. However, he positively refused to do anything for Jo-Jo Kerr. Jo-Jo's gang had made a practice of getting three or four plebes out behind the gas house late in the afternoon, after drill, on week days, and after supper, on Saturdays.

"Mr. Jones, it is your turn. Report at the gas house after supper," directed Gillespie, one of the gang, as Buck was going up to supper formation Saturday.

"You come, too, Mr. Dreggs," he added, as Dreggs, a September plebe, passed at that time.

"Please, sir, let me off to-night. My mother is in town, and I have an engagement to join her immediately after supper," pleaded Dreggs.

"What do I care for that? You'd better be there on time."

Dreggs was much disturbed, but after supper finally decided to send a note to his mother, to keep her from getting uneasy. So he dispatched the note, telling her that he had to report to Jo-Jo's gang behind the gas house.

The gang was all present that night, and had a half dozen plebes going through the stunts. All went smoothly until Jo-Jo ordered Buck to "dive for Casey" under one of the old cannon. Buck never budged.

"You refuse?" asked Jo-Jo savagely.

"Yes."

"Put on 'sir' when you speak to an upper classman."

Buck said nothing.

"I told you how he was, Whaley," said Jo-Jo. "He knows I am too big to fight him."

Buck's lip began to curl.

All the upper classmen began to center around Buck to the neglect of Dreggs and the others, who were left standing on their heads.

"Leave Mr. Jones to me," said Whaley, coming up close to Buck. "You refuse to obey Mr. Kerr?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you want to fight?"

"No, sir. I don't want to fight."

"You'll have to obey Mr. Kerr or fight me."

"I'll not obey Mr. Kerr."

"Then get your seconds and meet me in twenty minutes in room thirty-one on the top floor of the New Quarters."

At this juncture a woman's scream was heard.

"Oh, my boy! My poor boy!" And Mrs. Dreggs rushed over to her son standing on his head.

They were all about to laugh, when behind her they saw the officer-in-charge coming up on one side and the officer of the day on the other.

"Caught red-handed, gentlemen," remarked the officer-in-charge, as he had the officer of the day write down all the names of the upper classmen and of the plebes.

There was wild consternation among Jo-Jo's gang, and soon the air was full of rumors of how Dreggs and his mother had trapped the whole gang and any number of the other second classmen were caught, and were sure of dismissal. But Buck paid little attention to the matter of reports.

"Henderson, will you be one of my seconds? Bill-erson, will you provide the bucket of water and the sponge?"

Then he went off to find Preble.

"Preble, will you be my second? Jo-Jo tried to run me and Whaley took it up. It'll be to a finish."

Buck spoke slowly and deliberately between his set jaws.

Preble knew only too well that it would be to a finish. He knew that Whaley was the best boxer in the Academy, and that he was dead game. And he knew what the set look on Buck's face meant.

"It's a confounded shame, Buck, for two good men like you and Whaley to fight over such a man as Jo-Jo."

"I did everything Whaley ordered. It was not necessary for him to take Jo-Jo's fight. I have seen this coming on for a long time. Whaley thinks that I need taking down. He made up his mind to fight me long ago. This is only the opportunity he has been waiting for."

Buck began making his preparations.

"Promise me, Preble, that you will not let them take me away, no matter how badly used up I may seem. I'm going to stick it out. Go by the gymnasium," he continued, "and bring my gym slippers and trousers, and bring some resin."

Preble began to get nervous and pale.

"Don't fail me, Preble. Swear you will stand by me this time!"

"I'll stand by you, Buck."

Fifteen minutes from the time the group at the gas house broke up, the parties were assembled in the fighting room. Preble had brought face towels and bath towels, a bottle of ammonia, and a heart stimulant, called amyl nitrate, which he got at the drug store.

Getting caught hazing was a tragedy. Ten second classmen were involved. But even this took second place when it became known that Whaley and Buck had gone to the fighting room.

"Whaley will knock him out in twenty minutes," was the general comment.

The door was locked, and a sentinel stationed at the head of the stairs. By 7.40 everything was ready. The two beds, tables, wash stands, and wardrobes had been shifted into one corner of the room. This room had become the fighting room because it was larger than the others, and farthest from the office of the officer-in-charge, and the gas fixtures were out at the sides instead of in the center, leaving a larger space and giving a more even light.

Buck and his seconds were located near the window; Whaley and his near the door. Fonste, who had agreed to referee, was in the center, watch in hand.

"Gentlemen, are you ready?"

The principals stepped out, stripped to the waist, both perfect specimens. It was apparent that Whaley was in better training. His biceps and shoulder muscles stood out like a professional prize fighter's. Buck, however, looked firm and solid, with uniform development. They were about the same height and weight, though Buck looked a mere boy, Whaley being clearly four or five years his senior. The moment they took position and raised their guards, the disparity in skill was glaring. Buck had only taken the boxing lessons given during the winter exercises. Whaley had taken special lessons for three years, and for two years had had no match in the Academy.

They began by sparring lightly, cautiously, keeping well away. Whaley soon found out Buck's want of skill, and began to land his blows with scientific, almost mathematical precision, Buck making but a poor showing in his efforts to parry. The first round Whaley landed a stiff blow on Buck's right eye, and another in the cheek, while Buck never came anywhere near getting in a blow. "It's all one way," thought Fonste. Jo-Jo beamed with satisfaction.

During the second and third rounds, Whaley played on Buck's face like a performer on a piano. Buck only got in a glancing blow that amounted to nothing.

"Show him your muck this time," whispered Jo-Jo in Whaley's ear, as he advanced for the fourth round.

Whaley smiled his relish.

For some time it seemed there would be no execution in this round. Whaley was playing for a good opening, and presently, quick as a flash, he landed a staggering blow on Buck's nose. Buck's hands flew up. He seemed to stagger. The blood spurted from both nostrils. But quick as thought he was back on guard, made one feint, then rushed Whaley, broke down his guard and landed a crashing blow in his right eye.

During the fifth and sixth rounds, Whaley became cautious again, and landed four damaging blows, without receiving any punishment himself.

"It's time for a knock-out blow, old chap," whispered Jo-Jo to Whaley, as he advanced for the seventh round.

Buck realized from Whaley's play that he was preparing for a surprise. It came without warning. With the swiftness of a cat, and the strength of an ox, Whaley made an uppercut with all his might, landing full under Buck's chin. Lightning seemed to flash through Buck's brain; everything turned dark. He suddenly realized that he was on his knees swaying from side to side, his seconds rushing up. He fairly leaped to his feet.

"Back!" he said, as he shoved his seconds out of the way, and rushed upon Whaley.

He received a blow between the eyes, but paid no heed. Through Whaley's guard he rushed, and with a thud landed a body blow that echoed about the room. Whaley gasped and staggered. Buck turned for another rush.

"Time!" called Fonste. "Gentlemen," he continued, "I would suggest that it be called a draw."

Whaley shook his head. Buck shook *his* head.

During the eighth round, Whaley sparred for wind, landing only a few light blows on Buck's cheeks and eyes, which were already reduced to pulp.

Just before the end of the ninth round, the whole group was surprised to see Buck land a clean, scientific, but heavy blow in Whaley's left eye.

"He keeps his head all the time," thought Fonste.

"Don't get careless," whispered Jo-Jo to Whaley, as he saw Whaley was beginning to lose his temper.

At the outset of the tenth round, Whaley rushed Buck and landed two heavy blows in quick succession. But Buck followed him back, and landed two blows equally as effective before he got away. Whaley was in a rage. He lunged out with a wild, vicious blow. Buck parried, and with a counter caught Whaley on the bridge of the nose, and the blood poured forth.

"It is now nine o'clock, gentlemen, and I would again suggest that we call it a draw."

Whaley shook his head. Buck shook *his*. Whaley had thought his prey so easy, he was becoming impatient to finish him up.

The eleventh was a brutal round. Three times they clinched. Whaley had become reckless. He cared but little for his own guard. Each blow he wanted to be a knock-out blow. Twice he landed a furious blow on Buck's body, but twice received in return a staggering blow in the face, coming forth with his nose broken. A bloody sight they looked as they drew off from the eleventh round, both covered with blood, both spitting blood and bleeding at the nose. It made Preble sick at the stomach, and Jo-Jo began to take alarm.

"Don't let him get in," he cautioned Whaley. But Whaley was in a blinding rage.

At the opening of the twelfth round, he caught Buck with another uppercut under the chin, that stretched him flat upon the floor; but Buck was up in an instant. Whaley tried to fight him back, but he broke down his guard, and, to the astonishment of all, landed an uppercut under Whaley's chin, that laid him flat out in turn.

"Time! It is now 9.30, gentlemen, and again I would urge that we call it a draw."

Whaley shook his head, anger showing in his eyes. Buck shook *his* head; but there was not the slightest evidence of emotion. Whaley now looked nearly as bad as Buck; both were pounded to jelly, and smeared with blood. Whaley was breathing through his mouth. Buck's mouth was firmly closed, except at intervals when he turned to spit out a mouthful of blood.

"You'll have to let him have the temple cut, Whaley," whispered Jo-Jo. "You needn't have any fears. He's made of whitleather."

Buck was surprised to see Whaley start up the thirteenth round cautiously, sparring for an opening, though impatient rage flashed from his eyes. Buck had never heard of the dangerous "temple cut." He saw Whaley advance with his guard half down, and was about to take advantage of the opening, when suddenly Whaley half whirled, clearing the way with his left hand, and with a swinging, crashing blow, struck Buck in the temple.

"My skull is crushed," thought Buck, as all turned black.

The next thing he knew, the smell of ammonia was in his nostrils. Consciousness came back like a flash.

"Bring the amyl," he heard Preble say. But in an instant he was on his feet. He reeled at first, but started toward Whaley, who half smiled a satanic smile, as if to say, "That ended you. You needn't try any more." But to the astonishment of all, Buck put up his guard, drew a few deep breaths, rushed Whaley, and like a thunderbolt, gave him a swinging temple cut that stretched him out upon the floor.

Jo-Jo shook him. There was no response. Gillespie threw a half bucket of cold water over his face. No sign.

"Gentlemen, take your positions."

Buck stepped out. Fonste marked the time: "Five seconds more; three seconds; time is up. I award the contest to Mr. Jones."

Fonste then went over to examine Whaley. He was still as limp as a rag. No breathing yet. Fonste put his ear down on his chest.

"His heart has stopped."

Panic seized the crowd.

"A moment," said Buck imperatively as he went over to Whaley's prostrate form. "Bring me the amyl, Preble."

Preble brought it, and Buck soaked the end of a towel and put it over Whaley's mouth and nose, and began to press down upon his chest. In time there was an indication of a return of breathing, and soon Buck put his ear down and heard the heart begin to flutter a little, then stop. Then he applied the amyl and the respiration, and soon it fluttered again.

"Preble, go for the surgeon. Henderson, stay with me. The rest of you had better go to your rooms."

They obeyed. When the surgeon and the officer-in-charge finally came, there were only Buck and Henderson; no upper classmen.

"His heart flutters and beats a little at intervals, doctor, but he hasn't begun to breathe yet," said Buck.

"This looks like a slaughter pen," remarked the officer-in-charge, as he looked about at the blood that covered the floor and even spattered the walls.

The surgeon examined Whaley carefully; went over the body bruises, the neck, the face and the head.

"The blow on the temple did the work. It's a question of the heart."

"Look here, Mr. Jones," and Dr. Woodgate began examining Buck's wounds. "You are more done up than Mr. Whaley, and a heavier blow on the temple. Did *your* heart stop?"

"For a short while only, sir."

"How is it now?"

"All right, sir."

The surgeon turned to the officer-in-charge.

"Send for my assistant. Tell him to prepare for an operation for concussion of the brain. Direct the hospital steward and nurses to bring a stretcher.

"Mr. Jones, you'd better go straight to the hospital and go to bed. I'll come and dress your wounds as soon as I can leave Mr. Whaley."

"Please, sir, I'm all right. I'd prefer not to go to the hospital. Let me help you."

"You've done what was needed already. You may have saved him. I can't tell yet. Now you'd better look out for yourself."

The cadets had been gathering in groups for an hour previous. Wild rumors began to circulate when the fight broke up, when Whaley, still unconscious, was taken on a stretcher to the hospital. The report went forth that he was dead, and that Buck was dying. The rumor spread to the town; thence to Baltimore. The next morning the

papers had it: "A terrible hazing fight to the death. Whaley, of Texas, a second classman, dead; and Jones, of Alabama, a plebe, dying."

Buck could not sleep that night. Preble stayed up applying a cold pack and raw beef, but these applications could not stop the terrible headache that set in, the first headache he had ever had. About midnight the surgeon came in.

"How is Mr. Whaley?"

"We can't tell yet. How are you?"

"All right; but my head aches."

"Of course your head aches, Mr. Jones. The wonder is it hasn't split." And he gave him a capsule, after which Buck dropped off into a dazed sleep.

At reveille, the surgeon came again.

"How are you now?"

"All right, sir, but a little dazed. I'll have to get you to lance my eyes so I can see out."

The surgeon expected Buck to keel over when he got up to dress; but was surprised to see him proceed as usual. Buck felt light-headed, but even the surgeon could detect no sign of heart failure. He came prepared to tell Buck that they would send a stretcher for him in a short while and take him to the hospital. But to his utter surprise Buck finished dressing, and went out for breakfast formation, passing the men coming down with the stretcher.

Buck's face looked like a wasp's nest, and ugly, black lumps and blotches covered him from the top of his head down to the belt.

By Sunday night correspondents began to arrive, and telegrams began coming in from all parts of the country. For two weeks Whaley hovered between life and death. The whole nation was stirred. Every newspaper in the

land cried out against "the barbarous, brutal practice of hazing."

A court-martial was called. Jo-Jo and his whole gang were convicted of hazing and were dismissed, and fifteen others besides, who had never dreamed of being found out. Buck hated to go on the stand, but had to do it, and under the searching questions of the judge advocate, he had to tell everything. These dismissals didn't satisfy the country. Reforms were demanded. A congressional committee of investigation was appointed and came to Annapolis. Fortunately, before it finished its sittings, Whaley passed the danger point and began to recover. The committee returned to Washington, nevertheless, with recommendations to Congress for drastic legislation.

As soon as Whaley was well enough, he also was court-martialed, found guilty, and dismissed. Buck pleaded for him before the court in vain. He got a special day's leave, and went down to Washington and pleaded with the Secretary of the Navy, and with the President; and got the Senator from Alabama to take up Whaley's cause, and finally succeeded in getting Whaley reinstated. It being dangerous for him to study for the approaching examinations, he was turned back to the next class. On their way back to Annapolis together, Whaley said:

"Jones, why was it that you refused to take running from Jo-Jo?"

"When I whipped him last year, it was agreed between us."

"He lied to me about it," replied Whaley. "I'm disgusted with the whole thing," he added, and paused. "And I'm thoroughly ashamed of that fight."

"So am I," said Buck.

Another pause.

"Fighting is silly, anyhow."

"I agree with you thoroughly," replied Buck.

The effect of the upheaval against hazing was felt for many years, and the new classes that derived the benefit all attributed their good fortune to the terrible Whaley-Jones fight.

It was a strange, new sensation for the plebes to see a new class come in during May. Buck wondered, when he looked at the shy, awkward new plebes, if he had looked that way only a year ago.

The year had indeed made a tremendous change. The annual physical examination showed that he had grown two inches and a half, and had gained twenty-two pounds, and was beginning to be ranked as one of the big men of his class. The rigid mental exercise and discipline had produced equally pronounced results, particularly in the power of concentration and of grappling quickly with new problems, which became more and more evident upon examinations.

Buck made the highest annual examinations, as he had made the highest semiannual; but the great lead Huff had in monthly averages carried him far ahead, first in each and every study. Buck's heavy gains toward the end put him ahead of Rix, so that he stood second in studies; but when the final marks were worked out, with the demerits included, Rix was second. Each demerit takes off so much. Rix had but eighteen; Buck had a hundred and sixty-five.

There were seven "stars" in the class with over eighty-five per cent, and to be third was considered a great honor.

"Third, third," pondered Buck, when the final averages were posted. "*I must be first!*"

It was the first time in Buck's life that a year's work

had left him in any but first place. The experience was a bitter one, but he never brooded over it a moment. Herein he showed the fiber of his character, which had made leaps and bounds in development during the year, beyond even the physical and mental development.

"I congratulate you, Huff. It's great!! Far ahead in everything! We can't reach up to you with a ten-foot pole!" Buck shook Huff's hand heartily, and both smiled.

"I'll give you another try next year."

Buck smiled with a broad, frank smile. But Huff saw the look in his eye, and felt nervous for the future.

"Allow me to congratulate you, too, Rix. It's rough to lose a number on demerits, but I deserve it."

When Buck turned away from the bulletin board, he put the completed year entirely out of mind. In fact, the moment he came out of the last of the annual examinations, he turned his rigid routine upside down. He rushed off for a tennis game; and soon had a tournament arranged to come off in graduation week. He started up a scrub baseball nine, and issued a challenge to the officers' nine:

"The new third class challenges their instructors to meet them in the open." And the game was the event of graduation week. The officers completely unbent, and the most dignified ones made the most ludicrous errors. Some played who hadn't played in twenty years. The third classmen won, twenty-nine to seventeen.

"We are even now!" cried out Buck; "but you'd better give us better marks next year."

Buck got up a long-distance swimming contest, open for all comers. Ten entered. They started at Graveyard Creek Bridge, with two cutters pulling along with the swimmers. All reached the *Phlox's* wharf, with Buck in

the rear. Five dropped out between the *Phlox's* wharf and the *Santee*, at which point Buck was third. Three more asked to be picked up within the next mile, leaving Lockwood, a first classman, and Buck alone. On they swam. At last, off Newbury Point lighthouse, Lockwood called: "Jones, you win! I've had enough!" Billerson, who was in the cutter, declared that Buck had only gotten well into his second wind, and would have crossed the bay to Kent Island, if Lockwood hadn't given up.

When the rifle team went out for the skirmish run in the finals, Buck, who had not entered, or tried to qualify, picked up a rifle, and made the highest score yet made on a skirmish run.

"I'll try the rest," and he proceeded to make the highest score at all the different ranges.

"The prize belongs to Jones," several contestants declared at the close.

"No, indeed. I'm not entered. I had good luck."

And Buck positively declined to allow the rules to be suspended.

"I'm very much obliged for letting me go along. It was fine sport."

"I'm having the time of my life," wrote Buck to Hugh, his brother. And he did have a great time those days when the year's work was over, and before the third class cruise began. After the drills and exercises before the Board of Visitors, morning and afternoon, Buck and some other enthusiasts always had some kind of sport. The daylight was not long enough. After supper they continued in the gymnasium.

At last graduation came, at which the plebes became third classmen. This promotion staggers the imagination. There is nothing like it in human experience. Being made full admiral, with the vote of thanks of Congress,

is nothing in comparison. The plebes came back from chapel, Buck in the midst, swelling their chests with the pride of their new importance. They swaggered through Lovers' Lane, and lounged on the gunbacked seats, with their caps on the back of their heads. They spoke to upper classmen without saying "Mister," or putting on "Sir." Oh, the leap! the mighty leap, from the abyss of a plebe to the dizzy height of a third classman!

CHAPTER XVIII

BUCK LEARNS THE TERROR OF THE SEA

FOR several weeks many rumors had been afloat about the summer cruise. It was stated that one of the ships of the "New Navy" would be used, and that the cruise would be under steam and would extend to the Mediterranean. Another rumor had it that there was some trouble in Central America, involving our canal concessions, and that the practice cruise would be taken advantage of to show our flag in Nicaraguan waters and off the Mosquito Coast.

Saturday noon before graduation week, the *Jamestown* came into the harbor under tow, and was moored at the *Constellation's* buoy. That put an end to these rumors.

"It's to be just the same old cruise," remarked Preble with disappointment, as he and Buck came in from the parade of reception to the Board of Visitors, "and the only difference, we'll have to crowd together in a smaller ship."

Buck, however, was keen with interest, and could not wait till after dinner, but hurried down to the wharf and pulled off to the *Jamestown*.

"Is Casey on board?" he asked eagerly, as he came over the side. Then he caught sight of Casey and rushed forward.

Such a hand clasp as they had!

"You look so well, Casey—and you've finally accepted a warrant—Boatswain Casey!! It's fine!" Buck could not conceal his joy.

"How you've grown, Mr. Jones—I have never seen anything like it." Casey beamed all over. "Have you seen John Anderson and Ol Olsen and Pat Kelly? They are all on board except Kelly, who is on the *Kearsarge*, that is on her way. Anderson is a boatswain's mate now, and Olsen is captain of the foretop."

At this point the corporal of the guard came up.

"The officer of the deck would like to see you, sir."

"Very well." Buck turned red as he started off, and went up to the officer of the deck. "I am very sorry, sir; when I saw my old shipmate Casey, I forgot all about reporting and asking permission to come on board."

Buck barely had time to get ashore for dinner. The bugle blew when he was away down on the sea wall, but by a quarter-mile dash across the lawn he reached the ranks just as the battalion faced. At dinner the topic turned to the *Jamestown* and the cruise.

"Casey said something about the *Kearsarge's* coming, but I was called away at that moment," remarked Buck, and the rumor ran everywhere that the *Jamestown* and *Kearsarge* were both going on the cruise.

Monday morning, when the cadets went out in the bay on the *Wyoming* for seamanship drill, the *Kearsarge* appeared in the offing, under her own steam, and passed into the harbor.

"She's very much like the *Wyoming*," the remarks ran.

"She's the vessel that sank the *Alabama*," mused Buck, as he watched her a long time.

The order that was published the next day, giving the detail for the cruise, assigned the first classmen to

the *Kearsarge*, and the third and fourth classmen to the *Jamestown*.

Preble noticed that Buck was very thoughtful during the rest of the day. As they were about to turn in, Buck remarked abruptly:

"I'd like to go on the *Kearsarge*."

"So would I," said Preble.

"Let's try to get ordered to her."

"It's no use."

After breakfast formation next morning, Buck applied to the Commandant, then to the Superintendent, and then, with the permission of the Superintendent, wired to the Secretary of the Navy. To the surprise of all, instructions were wired back detailing Buck and Preble to the *Kearsarge*.

When Casey heard of this the next day he was greatly disturbed, and applied to the captain of the *Jamestown* to be transferred to the *Kearsarge*.

"Casey, the thing is impossible; the detail is all made up—I can't spare you. Besides, you have often said you hate these mongrel steam and sailing vessels."

"I have never asked many favors in my day, Captain, but I must ask this one."

At that juncture Buck came on board, half out of breath.

"Casey, you *must* get transferred. I have applied to the Navy Department for permission. Would John Anderson and Ol Olsen like to come?"

The Captain glared at Buck.

"You would demoralize my crew. I'll not approve the request."

All day the wires were hot; and at last an order came direct from the Navy Department to transfer Buck, Preble, Casey, Anderson, and Olsen to the *Kearsarge*.

Everybody was surprised.

"If an angel had told me it was possible, I would not have believed him," remarked Preble, when it was all settled. "The Secretary probably remembered about you and Casey at Portsmouth."

When Casey, Anderson, and Olsen went aboard the *Kearsarge* next morning, Kelly was at the gangway, his face beaming with delight, but the old merry twinkle was in his eye.

"Come here, men of the *Kearsarge*—look at these recruits! Just one week ago to-day, at Norfolk, Tim Casey—there he is, look at him—in this very spot swore that he wouldn't be found dead on any such mongrel tub as this; and here he is, begging us to take him in."

Casey had on a broad grin.

"It's not for your tub of a ship—I've got so little faith in it that I wouldn't trust any friend of mine on board alone. I've only come to be on hand to comfort my friend, Mr. Jones, when this derelict wears the patience out of him, for *he's* a seaman, a true seaman, every inch of him."

The *Kearsarge* lost little time after graduation. By noon Saturday she was under way, and about sundown Sunday she passed out of the Capes and headed about south-southeast, bound for the windward passage, under orders to put in at Kingston, Jamaica, where further orders would be waiting.

In a few days, Buck knew every nook and corner of the vessel, and soon became familiar with the machinery, the main engines and auxiliary engines, the main boilers and donkey boilers.

The first morning out at sea, the chief engineer found Buck in the after fire room, stripped to the waist, shoveling coal and slicing the fires like an experienced stoker.

He made a special request to the Captain for assignment to the big eleven-inch pivot gun, forward, "For," he remarked, "Casey tells me that this gun sank the *Alabama*."

The second day out, a brisk breeze sprang up from the northeast, and blew like a trade wind. All plain sail was set, the fires were banked, and for five days they ran with the wind a little abaft the port beam, averaging over eight knots an hour under sail alone.

Buck was keen about the navigation, and began keeping a navigation notebook like the first classmen. In his enthusiasm he would take sights of the planets and fixed stars, and of Polaris, the North Star, in addition to the sight of the sun, morning, noon, and afternoon. Soon he began comparing the positions he found with those of the navigator and the first classmen, and formed ideas of his own as to the amount of current experienced each day. He was constantly going to the chart house, and followed every position plotted on the chart. He had long talks with Casey during the night watches, and Casey showed him the constellations of the Southern skies. The sixth night out he declined to go below at the end of his mid-watch.

"I'm going to stay up and discover America at day-break," he remarked.

He climbed up to the foretop with a pair of glasses, and just as the sun broke over the horizon he called out:

"Land on the port bow! San Salvador!! San Salvador!!"

Columbus scarcely watched this outpost of the unknown world with more eagerness than Buck did as the *Keearsarge* left Cat Island to the westward, and San Salvador (or Watlings Island) to the eastward, and passed down through Crooked Island passage. Toward noon the

breeze began to die down, and in the afternoon watch it fell to a dead calm, though they were now in the region of the northeast trade winds. When the wind failed to rise in the dogwatches, the Captain ordered the fires spread in the two after boilers, and proceeded under steam. The day closed in glory, in such a sunset as Buck had never seen—wonderful colors—new and strange shades of green and blue appearing in strata and in great spokes diverging from the sun. A weird brightness seemed to cover the heavens above and the sea around them.

“Isn’t it glorious, Casey?” said Buck in delight.

Casey shook his head. “I’m afraid it is a breeder, Mr. Jones. There’s trouble somewhere.”

They sighted Cape Maysi, at the east end of Cuba, about breakfast time next morning, then headed due south, then to the westward of south, through the windward passage. Buck wished that they might turn out of the course to look in at Santiago, or even at Guantanamo, or else at Port au Prince, but the ship held her course straight across for Jamaica and entered Kingston harbor about ten o’clock next morning.

Buck and Preble were off watch and applied for permission to go ashore, which the executive officer readily granted. They went along the docks, where negroes were loading bananas, then through the streets of Kingston, looking at everything, interested in everything—the motley population, the houses, but especially the palms and tropical plants. They took lunch and went out to the park and back toward the hills. Buck couldn’t resist the silent challenge of a tall cocoanut palm near the road, but shinned up it to the very tufted top, and threw down some green cocoanuts.

“You’ve ruined your new duck trousers, and nearly ruined a new blouse,” said Preble, as Buck came down.

"I can't help it. I *had* to climb that tree. I never saw such hard trees to climb as these cocoanuts—not a limb or even a knot for forty feet." And he and Preble cut into the thick rind and drank cocoanut milk till they could drink no more.

Walking along the roadside, they caught glimpses of the city and part of the bay. The British flag was flying on all sides, and suddenly, clearing a clump of trees, they saw the stars and stripes flying from the peak of the *Keasarge*. A lump came up into Buck's throat, and one came into Preble's, and a film of moisture spread over their eyes. No one can ever know how much he loves his country's flag until he has seen it in a foreign land, or has seen it when smoke and thunder are in the air.

They were still looking at the flag in silence, when a puff of smoke shot out from the bow gun, and a signal flag ran up to the main truck.

"One gun and the cornet—it's the general recall," exclaimed Preble, and both were off at a trot for the wharf, where they hired a shore boat and were soon on board. Coal lighters were alongside, and swarms of negroes of all sizes and ages were passing up the coal in baskets, the white of their blinking eyes making the only break in the expanse of coal-dust ebony from the tops of their bare heads, where they carried the baskets, to the soles of their bare feet.

"We are under sailing orders," said the executive officer, as Buck and Preble reported their return.

"Where are we going?" asked Buck of a first class-man on the edge of a group that was evidently talking about the developments.

"The Consul brought off telegraphic orders from the Navy Department for the ship to proceed to Bluefields, on

the Mosquito Coast of Honduras, with all dispatch. That means that we shall sail as soon as we finish coaling.

Coaling was a novel thing to Buck. It came near taking the romance out of steam; in spite of the canvas screens the coal dust penetrated everywhere—not only the decks, but the beams, the sides of the ship, the wardroom, the tables, the furniture, the staterooms, the very bedding—everything was begrimed; and the negroes, with their monotone chants and chatter, no longer seemed human beings. Buck went forward to find Casey, and the two went as far out on the bowsprit as possible.

“I told you, Mr. Jones, that a vessel with steam is no place for a seaman. I don’t feel easy while you are on this old tub. I’ve been feeling queer for two days. A hurricane is running out in the Windward Islands. The captain thinks he can run down and get below it before it curves to the northward; but he can’t do’t. It must have passed into the Caribbean last night, and we are sure to run head into it. Not that I mind a hurricane, Mr. Jones—if we were in a sailing ship I’d laugh at the hurricane, and it would be good sport for a seaman like you; but somehow, in this black mongrel I’ve got a presentiment. I want you to be very careful, Mr. Jones—take no chances anywhere.”

The superstition of the old sailor was contagious. Buck began to feel queer himself, though he laughed out loud at the idea. He noticed clouds out to the southeast, moving in confusion in different directions. The queer look in the heavens of the day before came back, though the sun disappeared about three o’clock and did not come out again. The breeze had sprung up from the northeast and was blowing fresh at 4.30, when the coaling was completed. The ship got under way and stood out under topsails to the southeast, as both watches washed down the

decks, fore and aft. Buck came on duty as gentleman of the watch in the evening watch. As he read the barometer he was more astonished each hour to find it so unsteady. He called Casey aft to look at it.

"Just as I told you, Mr. Jones. We are going straight into it. The wind has hauled to the eastward. The center is sweeping westward. We'll be in it before this time to-morrow. The Cap'n's got his orders. He believes in steam, and thinks he can run right over it." And Casey shook his head.

The ship was running eleven or twelve knots, with the wind just abaft the port beam. Buck went to the chart house and found the navigator worried about his departure. The thick weather had settled down quickly and cut off Kingston light soon after dark. Buck noticed that the course was laid nearly south, till clear of Portland Rock, and then about southwest by south to clear Roncador reef about twenty miles, passing to the south. The wind and sea continued to rise, and about four bells the watch reefed the topsails and took in the mainsail. Just before the watch was called the topsails were reefed again. Later, when the course was changed to the westward, and the wind and sea were quartering, the sails steadied the ship considerably, in spite of the heavy sea, and she fairly flew as she scudded along the wave crests, the patent log at times showing fourteen knots, and even more. All night she carried this sail, and all forenoon.

"It's easier riding this way than hove to," remarked the first lieutenant to the Captain.

"We are making a record run, too," answered the Captain. "The center has curved to the northward." He swept his finger out to the eastward, showing the way the storm center was running. "We'll keep her battened down and keep the fires banked, and if we can hold on

eight hours longer we'll pass across a day ahead of time without expending a pound of coal."

Buck greatly enjoyed the forenoon watch. On his plebe cruise he had had some stiff sailing, but it was nothing in comparison to this—a full-rig ship running before a hurricane with topsails and foresail set. The fires were still banked and the propeller was uncoupled. This made a heavy drag that helped to keep the ship on her course, but naturally cut down the speed. Nevertheless, the patent log constantly showed over fifteen knots. This tremendous sailing speed, with the roar of the seas and of the wind, fairly intoxicated Buck.

"It's great, Casey, great! the greatest thing I ever saw!"

Casey smiled. Buck had only been to sea once before, but he talked like an old salt.

"Yes, Mr. Jones, she runs like a scared dog before the wind and sea. But any old tub can do that. Nothing good will come out of it," he added after a pause.

Buck saw that Casey could not or would not get over his prejudice, and would not throw off his gloomy presentiment. Whether the ship deserved much credit or not, Buck realized that it was wonderful sailing. She seemed to travel on the great wave crests as on mighty rollers. A big wave coming under the quarter would literally lift the ship on its shoulders and run away with it, finally passing out from under the bow only to drop it on the shoulders of the next big wave.

The rain had poured in torrents during the latter part of the night, and the day came in overcast with heavy clouds driving low overhead. The half-masked sun had broken partly forth for a short interval about seven bells, permitting a fairly good time sight for longitude, though the horizon was indistinct. Buck was the only one besides

the navigator who was lucky enough to get a sight, and he found that his result corresponded well with that the navigator plotted on the chart. The navigator remarked that he was not worried about the longitude, but that the main thing was to get a good noon sight for latitude. Accordingly, the navigator, assistant navigator, and most of the first classmen were out on deck before seven bells, sextants in hand, watching for a glimpse of the sun. Buck got Preble to mark time. The sun was very unaccommodating, allowing only very imperfect sights, and the navigator finally gave it up, and by 12.30 all had gone below but Buck and Preble. As had once happened on his plebe cruise, by lingering Buck suddenly caught a good sight, and the sun was not too far from the meridian. He was a little slow in working it out, and when he went to the chart house the noon position had been plotted and the navigator had gone to lunch. The position plotted was forty miles north of the position he had found.

"Something must be wrong," he concluded, and he went over his work again, with the same result. Finally he went in to see the navigator.

"You must be out, Mr. Jones. I did not get very reliable noon sights, but the position came out as I expected, showing a northerly current of about twenty miles. By *your* position there would have been a southerly current of twenty miles. The sailing directions and chart show a strong northerly current."

Buck went away still unsatisfied. He went over his work again, and finally concluded it was right. He could scarcely enjoy the wonderful sailing during the afternoon, though the force of the hurricane rose yet higher. The wind and sea drew around to direct astern. The decks were constantly swept with spray and foam, but the stern always climbed the curling crests. They took a close reef

in the mizzen and main topsails, but still carried the fore-sail and single-reefed fore-topsail. But for the drag of the propeller, however, it would have been necessary to heave to. Casey, himself, with more than fifty years on the sea, had never seen a ship carry as much sail in so heavy a wind and sea. Buck drew out this reluctant confession when he announced forward that the patent log showed seventeen knots for the last hour. Casey shook his head.

"I don't like it, Mr. Jones. You can't tell anything about this kind of a ship."

It did not add to Casey's comfort of mind when Buck later told him that the navigator was forty miles out in his latitude.

"I *know* it, Casey. I never was more sure of anything in my life. If I can catch a Polaris sight, to confirm it, I'll report the matter to the Captain."

Casey said nothing. As the afternoon wore on, the wind and sea showed signs of coming around on the port quarter. At times the rain came down as if poured from the clouds. The seamen forward were enjoying the royal way in which the old ship took the great seas.

"She hitches up to each one in turn," remarked Anderson, "and rides him for a mile."

"How's that for you, Casey?" said Kelly, as the stern climbed a monarch wave and held its position. "One of the ships of your 'Old Navy' would have been pooped."

"Yes, a propeller makes a good sea anchor over the stern, but that's all it is good for. In the old navy we are not such fools. We'd have been hove to the last fifteen hours, snug and safe as a ferryboat. As it is, any of the young gentlemen might be washed overboard at any time." Then Casey added: "The navigator doesn't know our lati-

tude within forty miles. We've been going like a race-horse. We must have passed Serrana Bank by this time, and can't be far from Roncador. You can't see Roncador in clear weather more than four or five miles; in thick weather you can't see it at all. It's nothing but a few low sand banks on a coral reef. I've been out here before."

"Oh, it's all right, Casey; you've been in the dumps for two days, imagining that something would happen to Mr. Jones. He will take care of himself."

At that moment Buck came up with a sextant in his hand. He was bareheaded and barefooted, with an old pair of trousers belted about the waist. Everybody else, officers and seamen, were in rain clothes, sou'westers and rubber boots, protection against the spray and the intermittent rain. Buck had on only a white-flannel shirt, and didn't care how wet it became.

"What are you going to do with the sextant, Mr. Jones?" asked Kelly.

"I'm going to try to get a sight of the North Star."

Murphy laughed, and all the others joined in except Casey.

"It'll be black as ink in a half hour. A cannon ball couldn't get through those clouds, much less the starlight."

"I'm going to be ready and on the lookout, all the same; I think the navigator is out in his latitude."

Kelly looked at Casey.

"Mr. Jones is your authority, Casey, for saying the navigator is forty miles off." And Kelly smiled. Buck didn't mind this chaff of Kelly's, nor did Casey; but they both felt uneasy about the safety of the ship. Soon Buck found Preble, and the two went up on the poop to wait for any accidental sight of the North Star. Casey came up and tied a line around the waist of each of them. He had scarcely gone down when a half sea passed over

the poop and swept them off their feet, and would have swept them overboard but for the lines. But Buck held on to his sextant and Preble to his bull's eye lantern, and soon they were ready again.

"Casey has an instinct whenever I'm in danger," remarked Buck, as he looked through his sextant out toward the north. "Quick, Preble, quick! Stand by—mark!" For an instant only the North Star swept across a small patch of thin cloud, and at that instant a great wave broke on the horizon, giving a line of white.

"Did you get it, Buck?"

"Yes—fine! Did *you* mark all right?"

"Yes, to a half second."

Buck ran by and got the reading of the patent log, and was off to the chart house. In a few minutes he came running out and dashed for the cabin. He rushed by the orderly without waiting to be announced, and found the Captain and navigator poring over the Captain's chart.

"I've just caught a Polaris sight. It shows that the current has been setting south instead of north."

The Captain and navigator had just been discussing that very question. The Captain had been suggesting that the long run of the wind and sea under the hurricane might set up a reverse current. At that instant the orderly stepped in and said that Casey asked to see the Captain.

"Tell him to step in. We'll see what he thinks about it. What is it, Casey?"

"I've come, Cap'n, to urge you to bring her around and heave to for the night."

"Do you know these waters, Casey?"

"I know them well, sir."

"Do you know anything about the currents?"

"I know they are as treacherous as an Indian. When I was down here at Roncador in '63, on the *Brooklyn*, our navigator found that a hurricane reversed the currents reported on the charts and Sailing Directions. These are nasty waters, Cap'n, in a hurricane. I hope you won't go any farther."

Neither Casey nor Buck noticed the pallor that came over the faces of the Captain and navigator.

"Orderly, tell the officer of the deck to call all hands and take in the foresail and bring her to the wind as soon as possible."

There was no evidence of anxiety in the Captain's voice, but there was a strange feeling about his heart.

"According to your Polaris sight, Mr. Jones, what is our position now?"

Buck read him off the latitude and longitude just as he heard the boatswain's mate calling all hands.

"Where does that put us?"

The navigator was already plotting with his parallel rulers. He brought the rulers up. His face turned ashen pale. He slid them back to the parallel and brought them up again. All stopped breathing.

"It puts us—" He stopped, then started again. "It puts us on——"

The sentence was never finished. There was a terrifying crash. The four men were hurled against the bulkhead. Buck struck head foremost and was stunned for a moment. When he came to, Casey had him in his arms, staggering forward with him in the dark.

"I'm all right, Casey."

And Buck slid down. When his feet touched the deck he found the deck was heaving beneath them. The deck planking began to fly up.

"Go forward!" he heard Casey calling out to strag-

glers found in the gangway, his voice scarcely audible above the terrific din. "Come on, Mr. Jones. Come on!"

Casey hurried him forward, his arm around his body. Buck's senses were fast returning. Seeing a giant wave coming up over the stern, the two men made a dash forward. They felt the timbers cracking. Over his shoulders, in a flash of lightning, Buck saw the mizzenmast go by the board with a mighty crash. An instant later the mainmast fell. Just after they passed the waist skylight the deck broke open. They came upon the officers and crew gathered around the foremast. As it happened, all hands were forward when she struck.

"She's breaking up aft," reported Casey, as he found the Captain.

"I've been expecting it," he answered calmly.

The din and turmoil were deafening. They had just clewed up the foresail when the ship struck, and Kelly, acting under a sailor's instinct, cut away the fore-topsail sheets. The noise that followed from the wild flapping of the sails overhead, as they tore themselves to shreds, increased the din of cracking spars and creaking timbers. Above these disrupting sounds came the terrifying roar of the reef, impatient for its prey. Each man said to himself, "The end is at hand," but there was no turmoil, no confusion. The enlisted men were farthest forward, the petty officers and warrant officers next, then the cadets, and last the officers, the Captain being farthest aft toward the point from which death would advance. The Captain called Casey and the first lieutenant for a conference. All the rest stood waiting for their decision. At that moment a mammoth sea struck the stern and crumpled it up for fifty or sixty feet, and a seething, hissing flood swept forward with floating wreckage, till it licked the feet of the refugees as they huddled together. Buck heard a

voice rise above all the din—the clear tenor voice of the Chaplain:

“ My country, 'tis of thee——”

Other voices joined—all the voices joined—voices of four hundred and sixty men looking death straight in the face. Buck had been phlegmatic up to this point. He was now electrified—everybody was electrified.

The whole visage of death was transformed. Men began to smile. The second verse followed the first, then the third verse—then the fourth. As the last strains died down, a great wave struck a mighty blow that almost threw the men from their feet. The stern of the ship, for a hundred feet, broke sheer off, and crushed the port side for fifty feet farther as it broke into great masses of wreckage and ground itself up on the reef to port. The voice of the Chaplain again rose above the tumult:

“ Oh, say, can you see, by the dawn's early light——”

Buck's blood tingled to the tips of his fingers. His spirit seemed to rise with the song high above the storm. A vivid flash of lightning showed up the terrible desolation. Like a streak Buck dashed aft. The water rose. The breaking sea swept by. He struck out, half swimming, half wading, across the wreckage, climbed the tottering chart house, broke in, found an ensign, dashed back, climbed the forerigging, then out on the foreyard, and lashed the Stars and Stripes to the fore lift. Higher still, above the din, the voices rose:

“ Oh, say, does that Star-spangled Banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave? ”

Under the light of a vivid flash, all eyes turned to the national flag fluttering above them in the gale. A titanic

wave struck at this instant; the whole rear half of the great ship crashed away, and a hungry curler leaped toward the bow. At this point Casey stepped out and piped:

"A call for volunteers! Who will volunteer to swim ashore with a line?"

The dim light of the lanterns hung about the fore-castle lit up the faces of the men. For a moment there was a pause, then, as with one impulse, the whole ship's crew, officers and men, stepped forward.

"If you are my friend, Casey, recommend me," Buck pleaded.

Then Anderson edged up to Casey and took him by the arm:

"We have been shipmates these many years, Casey. Let me have it."

"Casey, you know how you have always backed my swimming—now is the chance to prove it," and Olsen took Casey by the other arm.

"See here, Casey," spoke up Kelly, "don't forget me."

Casey could hardly extricate himself from those importuning him, though everyone knew that a swimmer trying to cross the reef would be dashed to pieces. Casey drew himself up proudly as he turned to the Captain.

"It's like the Old Navy, sir. Men who hardly know how to swim have volunteered. The whole ship's company has volunteered."

The Captain stepped out.

"This is worthy of the traditions of the service. Casey, choose the man and give him his instructions."

The Captain's voice was as steady as if on drill. Casey called:

"Ol Olsen, step out."

The rest looked on with envy as Olsen stepped up for instructions.

"Swim to windward till you find a gap in the reef, then go in. There is a gap somewhere above here. When you get ashore, come down opposite the ship, pull in a heavier line, then haul the catamaran across the reef—and a raft we'll have ready."

Olsen stripped—a magnificent physical specimen, deep chested, with muscles like iron.

"John Anderson is swifter, but Olsen has the power," Casey remarked to the Captain.

The Captain of the forecastle brought out a long coil of marline stuff.

"I'm fixing a slip knot here," said Casey to Olsen, as he passed a bight of the line over Olsen's right shoulder and brought the knot close up under his left armpit. "It's running like a mill race. Go full power from the start. If you find you can't make it, slip the line and try to swim around to the lee side of the bank. It is useless to try to cross the reef unless you find the gap."

Olsen understood perfectly. They lowered him with a whip from the foreyard. Glancing to see that the line was clear, he plunged into the crest of a big wave that carried him backward for some distance, but like a flash they saw him cross the trough with a mighty stroke, bearing out obliquely from the ship, and soon the darkness swallowed him. Everybody watched the line as Kelly paid it out carefully. For a time it bore almost abeam.

"He's holding his own," remarked Kelly.

Then it seemed to draw a little to windward.

"He's gaining," was the hopeful word that passed along, and men began to ask Casey questions about Roncador, for Casey had been all over the reef years before.

He went ahead directing the construction of a raft on

the forecastle, but stopped every few minutes to go over and look at the line.

"Still gaining a little, I think," said Kelly.

Casey followed the line out into the darkness.

"I'm afraid not, Kelly." A pause followed. "He's barely holding his own."

A gloom spread over the company. A great wave struck, and the big pivot gun went crashing through the bottom. Casey crossed over.

"He's losing, Captain. The sea is too much. He'll have to slip."

Soon the line slackened. Kelly pulled gently, then began to haul in rapidly.

"He has slipped, sir."

Buck had watched every movement of Olsen's, had followed the line at every instant. When it was all in he went over to where Casey and the Captain were in deep conference.

"It's the sea, sir," Casey was saying. "No human power can withstand these curlers."

"Do you think the gale will moderate soon?"

Casey shook his head.

"Do you think we can hold on here for long?"

"The bow ran up high and tight, sir, but the seas are eating the wreck up bite by bite."

As Casey finished speaking, a great wave struck like a thousand battering rams; the deck under their feet buckled, and a tremendous crash followed.

"The after boilers have fallen in, sir. They'll grind like a millstone."

The two men looked at each other in silence.

"Captain," spoke up Buck, between his set teeth, "*I'd* like to try."

The Captain looked at Casey.

"We might try again, sir. There is no other way."

Casey spoke with indifference:

"But it is not Mr. Jones's turn yet."

Then he turned to the group.

"Anderson, do you still volunteer?"

Anderson knew that Olsen was a stronger swimmer, but he stepped out.

"Yes, sir."

"Then get ready."

Buck watched like a hawk every movement of Anderson's—how he entered the water, how he took the curlers. For several minutes Anderson gained considerable distance. Hope again began to revive; but it was one of those semislack intervals in the sea way; when the monster waves came back to the charge, Anderson began to lose ground. His great speed was of no avail; the combers hurled him back like an infant. Slowly he dropped back. Kelly soon tested the line.

"He's slipped, sir."

Despair spread over all. The sea seemed to roar louder in its savage exultation. Four great curlers pounded in succession. The forward boilers fell, and the great cylinders began to roll on each other and higher up the reef, and to grind the creaking timbers to shreds. Everybody realized that it was but a question of a few hours at most when the last plank would go.

"Captain, it's *my* turn now," said Buck between his teeth.

"Not yet, Mr. Jones," replied Casey. "The *next* turn is yours. This one is mine." Casey spoke slowly. There was infinite firmness and infinite tenderness in his voice. A smile spread over his grizzled face as he made his preparations. Many hearts felt heavy as they watched him.

"Get your line clear, Kelly; I'm going off of the foreyard."

Buck stood close, and felt a leaden weight on his chest. Casey looked at him long and tenderly. Buck dared not speak, and he ground his teeth and lips together. There was no word of farewell. At the rigging, Casey held Buck's hand in a long clasp, then turned and climbed aloft and went out to the end of the fore-yardarm.

"It's just the way he used to go in swimming," said Kelly, and his voice grew husky. Kelly was a brave, strong man, ready to die himself the next minute; but the tears came to his eyes. Others turned away. The Captain wiped his cheek. Buck stood rigid.

Casey stood up on the yardarm, facing the sea, steady-ing himself with his right hand on the lift, while his left hand kept the line clear. In the dim light they saw him calmly wait his chance. As a great wave approached, they saw his white form leap far out, straight over the crest, and a flash of lightning later showed his white head in the trough beyond. He had made a half wave length on the dive. The line paid out rapidly.

"He's giving his great giant stroke," remarked Kelly with admiration.

Faster and faster the line paid out, straight to windward.

"It's great," said the Captain.

"Great," others repeated; and hopes began to revive. For fully a quarter of a mile the line must have paid out steadily. Then it began to slacken.

"If he were only thirty years younger," said Kelly.

Then it began to go by spurts—then it stopped—then it slackened.

"Has he slipped, Kelly?"

"No, he's working still—but he's losing."

Buck didn't wait for the rest. In a stolid, deliberate manner, he got out a tarpaulin and cut off some wide strips, took off his clothes and wrapped the strips around his abdomen, to keep it warm. By the time the end of the line was in, Buck reported to the Captain that he was ready. A half dozen men stepped up and protested, and asked to take Buck's place.

"He's too young, Captain."

"But Casey chose him next." And the Captain remained firm.

When Kelly secured the line under Buck's arm, the men standing near noticed that Buck pulled the end through its own part to join it tight.

"He doesn't intend to slip," they whispered.

Buck waited till a pair of great waves passed, then, accompanied by two men with lanterns, he ran aft along the wreckage, almost to where the boiler cylinders were steadily grinding up the part that remained. He ran the risk of injury, but he gained fully thirty feet to windward ere he climbed up, saw that his line was clear, and dived into the side of a curler. He came up in the trough and made a quick gain with an overhand stroke, then began to climb the side of the next big wave, when it reared and curled and dashed him back with terrible violence. Buck had never conceived that water could engender such force. The men paying out the line were astonished and elated at the remarkable gain, when Buck's strategy made almost as much at the start as the others had made altogether. Then the line slackened. Kelly shook his head.

"A brave lad. A brave lad," the men said as they turned away.

The line started out again, only to slacken back.

"It's no use," sighed Kelly, with a groan.

The line started out again.

"Has he slipped?" asked the Captain, coming over.

"No, sir. He's not going to slip. I saw him jam the knot. He's going to fight till he drowns."

The line slacked again, then started out again, then slacked, then started out a little more. There seemed to be some regularity about it. Kelly called the Captain over.

"Watch the line, Captain."

They watched it closely. An interval of slackness, then a little paying out; another interval, then a little more paying out.

"He's worked out some kind of method, sure. The question is, how long can he keep it up? At this rate it will take hours to make a half mile."

When Buck recovered from the shock of the first curler, he struck out manfully across the trough that followed, and up the side of the next wave, when it, likewise, curled and hurled him back farther than before.

When he was about half way up the side of the next wave, he dived through and came out in the trough beyond, the line showing that in the dive he held his own. Across the trough he struck out overhand for a substantial gain, then dived into the next. It seemed he would never come out of this one. When he finally emerged he found it was a double wave—a wave on a wave. He opened his mouth for a gasp of breath, only to be strangled by the breaking crest of the second wave, which caught him and hurled him back.

He finally got his breathing equilibrium, and dashed across the trough and dived. This time he kept his eyes open, and by the white streak could tell where the crest was. It was a long dive, but he held out till he again emerged near the trough, and made a dash, and dived

again. The efforts were terrific, and the diving became torture at times; but he got it down to a system, sizing up each wave as he began to mount its side. He learned to gauge the moment, in each case, when it was best to dive and the moment when it was best to emerge. Several times he was strangled, but each time he regained his equilibrium and went ahead with renewed effort. Slowly and steadily he forged his way.

It must have been about one o'clock in the morning when he started; day was now breaking, with the hurricane still at its highest. He had never looked back once; but after full day, wondering whether the ship was there yet, he turned at an opportune moment and looked. There was the ship about three quarters of a mile away, but only a small part left now. The foremast had fallen and all the men were crowded together on the topgallant forecastle, which was all that remained. He saw them waving. They were evidently watching him with glasses, and saw him when he looked back. As he turned and dived he thought he heard a hurrah above the roar of the storm and the reef.

No gap yet; and on he struggled. Could Casey have been mistaken?

His limbs had gradually become numb, though not so rapidly as in the cold water at Portsmouth; but worse than the numbness was the steady exhaustion. In that tremendous sea he had to go all the time at full strength.

"I'll *have* to rest," he finally concluded, and turned on his back for a short respite. The first curler that came caught him up, turned him sidewise, wound him in the line, and dropped him, strangling, twenty feet back.

He struck a steady pace again. "This is my third wind," he pondered to himself. "I'll keep it up till the end." He knew that his strength was slowly ebbing, but

he felt a strange, deep satisfaction in his unfaltering resolve never to give up.

It must have been eight o'clock at least when, still without any visible evidence of a gap in the reef, he thought he detected an interruption in the sound under water. In the constant diving he came to distinguish, when under water, between the roar of the sea and the roar of the reef. The next dive, he listened carefully and was sure there was a break in the continuity of the reef roar. It grew more perceptible. He changed his course a little inshore. There was no mistake.

The gap—the gap! The joy came like a shock, and a curler strangled him. He had to dive more frequently as he came closer. Soon he saw above water the limits of the gap. Nearer the reef line he drew. Then, when abreast the center of the gap, he turned square, and struck out for the breach. The hissing and roaring were terrifying as he reached the line of the reef edge, and a great sense of relief came when he passed in unobstructed. With his terrible exhaustion, a relaxation followed, and before he realized the new danger of the surf, he was hurled in a lump, end over end, on the beach. Half unconscious, he felt a heavy pull over his shoulder.

The line is caught. He jumped up instantly, only to be dashed to the ground again and hurled far up the beach. For a moment the line cut deep into his shoulder, then it slacked. A shudder passed through his very soul.

The line had parted. He drew it in quickly, and the end appeared. "God, help me!" he cried, and ran out into the surf to search for the line, only to be dashed to the ground and almost stunned. He jumped up instantly; as the next breaker came he dived flat down on his face, and it passed.

He went back, groping on the bottom in vain. Then

he went out still nearer the gap and passed within ten feet of the terrible reef edge, diving and scraping the bottom, where his fingers were scratched by the sharp angles of the coral foundation.

Again and again he dived and swept the bottom. It was getting too deep for diving, but down he went for the last time. He groped on toward the reef.

At this instant he felt something slide along his leg. It was the line! He reached and seized it. It slipped.

He rolled over on the ground and wrapped it three times around his body, braced his heels and gave three pulls, then three more, and then it began to pay out. It seemed an eternity when he reached the surface and gasped and had to dive again. Carefully, he approached this time, and struck in obliquely so the line would not catch the edge of the gap. When on his feet, he quickly cleared the line and started down the beach, and ran till abreast of the ship. It was only about a hundred feet away from the beach. He hauled a four-inch line ashore, then hauled the catamaran, with six men held down by lashings. Then they hauled the raft ashore, with ten men. The raft and catamaran were then hauled back to ship by two sets of ropes, and the trips were fast and sure. By twelve o'clock the whole crew was off. The Captain came in the last trip, alone. Before one o'clock, the topgallant forecastle went over with a crash and was devoured by the insatiable reef.

"Call all hands to muster," ordered the Captain.

"All present, sir, but Boatswain Casey, Boatswain's Mate Anderson, and Petty Officer Olsen," reported the executive officer, and at the words Buck's heart suddenly became dead within him.

CHAPTER XIX

BUCK AND PREBLE HAVE SOME STRANGE ADVENTURES

THE little coral creatures of the tropical seas are the mightiest builders in all the world. Palaces, towers, cathedrals, bridges, sea walls, jetties, are as fragile pygmies compared to the great reef piles these tiny insects build along the rock bed of the ocean. Roncador is a coral masterpiece, probably reared upon volcanic rock, the farthest out in the Caribbean, where soundings show two thousand fathoms.

But Roncador's beauty lies below the water. Above, it is a desolate spot in the waste of waters. The highest point is but thirteen feet over all. It is but four or five miles long and a mile wide, with ponds and lagoons, and necks of water cutting up the small respite of sand. Nature has shrunk from Roncador's desolation; a little cluster of dwarf palms is all there is to show. The hurricane and shipwreck added the climax to the desolation of nature. The angry sea swept masses and piles of wreckage in all directions, and seemed bent upon inundating the pitiful handful of dry land remaining.

But this bleakest desolation of dry land was like a paradise to those who had for fifteen hours been at the mercy of the pitiless sea. The Captain and first lieutenant began at once to organize the ship's company. While waiting for death on the topgallant forecastle, they had put the men for diversion to work as much as possible, get-

ting up what stores and provisions and equipment could be reached in the forehold and forecastle, and elsewhere on the wreck. As much of these as possible was lashed to the raft, for its last trip, and the things that could not be rafted were thrown over the sides to be driven up by the sea. In fact, the ship was so close to the beach, and so completely demolished, that not only its cargo, but the materials of the hull and fittings, were driven up ashore. Even coal from the coal bunkers was deposited high up on the beach. The Captain's chief concern was about fresh water. None was saved when the tanks were crushed. The scuttle butt in the forecastle happened to be full, and this was brought off on the raft; but already it was getting low, though only a reduced ration of water was allowed, and with clothing soaked by the spray and rain less thirst was experienced than usual. The Captain detailed the executive officer and thirty men to provide water. They proceeded to gather up all the casks, barrels, tanks, about the beach, and make them watertight, and to fit together parts of the mizzen topsail and mainsail, that came up on the beach, to catch the rain that continued to fall. They dug two wells in the highest part of the island, and found water more or less brackish, but good enough for cooking purposes. The navigator and rigger and twenty men were detailed to erect a flag pole and fly a signal of distress to attract any ship that might pass.

The senior watch officer, with the carpenter's gang and sailmaker's mates, ten cadets and fifty seamen, were detailed to improvise tents and build huts from the canvas and timber and planking on the beach. By sunset there was shelter for all, though of the crudest kind.

The second watch officer, paymaster, yeoman, ten cadets, and twenty seamen, were detailed to gather up everything available for food, from the boxes and barrels

of provisions rafted off, to the chunks of salt pork and tins of corned beef and dissolving hard-tack found strewed over the sand.

Each kind of work had its detail, and within a half hour after the muster every man was hard at work on his particular duty.

Buck and Preble were assigned with the junior watch officer and ten men as a fishing party.

"Mr. Jones is half fish himself. He naturally belongs to the fishing gang," remarked the Captain with a smile that would have warmed Buck's heart but for his silent grief at Casey's loss. The sea was running so high the fishing party could not do much, so they set to work to get together tackle and construct a net and seine. Buck and Preble were sent off with sacks to gather up shellfish and explore the island from the standpoint of fishing prospects. The sailmaker's mate had made Buck a breech cloth and pair of canvas sandals, to supplement the tarpaulin strips about his body that had served him so well.

"It's the most satisfactory dress I ever wore," declared Buck when Preble was inclined to laugh. "I'm always ready for rain and for going in the water, and feel free as a bird." For a moment he had forgotten Casey.

They found only sand crabs and conchs high up on the beach.

"This will not make a very savory dish, but I suppose they can make soup. I'm going to get a line and go into the surf on the lee and see if we can't find something better."

"Bring a knife with you to open the shells," Preble suggested.

So when Buck poured out his first sack of shellfish at the commissary headquarters, an improvised shack where all provisions were being collected, he gathered up a

coil of the line he had used in the night. He couldn't get a jackknife—the men were all using theirs—so he took a big butcher knife, washed up in a box of hardware, and stuck it in his waistcloth.

"You are the image of a Fiji Islander. You are my man Friday. Come ahead." And Preble led the way to the beach on the lee side, trying to draw Buck from his wordless sorrow. And he was partly successful, for there was work to do, and Buck remembered it. He tied the line around his waist and waded along the beach, while Preble held the other end of the line well ashore. In places Buck was astonished at the strength of the currents, even in depths not over his hips. In other places he found table flats, just under water, with holes and lagoons, without current. He had fallen into several of these holes while gathering shellfish, and saw schools of fish of many kinds.

"Won't we have fun over here when the nets and seines are ready?" he remarked, as he came out of a hole where a school of fish like large mackerel had darted into the crevices.

Then, a little farther, he paused on the brink of a large lagoon where the bottom sloped down toward the sea.

"I'll go around this one." And he started around the edge. "There's a lot of big eels on the bottom down there. I'll scare them up." And he waded down to his hips to have fun with the eels. They didn't seem to run at his approach, and he kicked among them. To his astonishment, one of them seemed to lay hold of his leg—then another one—then one laid hold of his other leg, and another and another, and all began to climb slowly up, winding about his legs. He jerked back, but they pulled down, heavier and heavier, and began to draw him into deeper water.

"Haul on your line, Preble—quick! A devilfish has got me!" And Buck braced himself with all his might.

His foot caught a solid hold and checked the sliding, with the water about at his waist. The weight had become very heavy. The tentacles climbed up to his body, sucking tight as they climbed. Buck reached down with his left hand to dislodge the tentacle climbing up his left thigh, and it seized his hand and held it down. He felt a tentacle climbing up his back. He drew his knife and completely severed the one that held his left arm. A great commotion followed, and another heavy tentacle completely lapped his left arm and body.

"Pull hard, Preble, I'm slipping down."

The monster kept its longest, lower tentacle holding to a fissure in the coral, and, having seized the victim securely with all the others, was preparing to draw him down.

Preble had braced himself and was hauling at the line with all his might. Between the two forces, Buck felt his knees begin to totter. It was hard to get a clean knife cut at the tentacles about his legs and body, so Buck deliberately examined the parts below water, and discovered the hideous, hooded monster's head at about the height of his calves. He was just raising his knife to strike at the body and head when he discovered the tentacle extending out to the bottom. Preble looked on aghast as he saw Buck bend far over into the water, and the uppermost tentacle close in over his shoulder; but like a flash Buck severed the tentacle holding to the coral, then rose and rushed headlong up the beach, bearing the monster on his back. The tentacles began to loosen and slip. Buck grabbed one of them a short distance up, with his left hand, and plunged his knife through the head and body, and jumped away as the great tentacles began to writhe in death.

"The old devil thought he had you."

"I began to think so myself."

They found a timber and lashed the monster to the center and shouldered it between them. Buck took up the half-filled sack of shellfish, and Preble took the coil of line, and they started proudly to camp with their catch.

It must have been about four o'clock in the afternoon when they started. The hurricane was still running high; the center had passed to the north, and the wind had veered to the west; the reef was thundering off to the north and east.

"Stop, Preble," said Buck abruptly, as he turned his ear out to seaward to the southwest.

"It's nothing but the gale and the sea," remarked Preble.

Buck still listened.

"There it is again."

Preble heard it this time, and his hair stood on end.

"Help! Help!" the agonized voice came from the angry sea.

They dropped their burden and ran headlong up the beach. Buck stopped.

"It comes from out there, Preble. Get your line secure here ashore, and be prepared to wade out to your neck, or swim with the line; but under no circumstances drop the line or go beyond its reach. The current is fierce."

Buck rushed into the surf and then struck out overhand toward the voice. About one hundred and fifty yards out he caught sight of a man's head about a hundred yards farther. Buck never made such speed before. Across the trough, through and under the seas he plowed.

"I'll be with you in a minute," he called out cheerily. The man was holding another man. Buck's heart pounded against the walls of his chest.

"Is that you, Casey?" he cried.

"No; it's Olsen."

"Is that Casey you have?"

"No; it's Anderson, Mr. Jones. The current is fearful. We've been trying to make it for two hours and were just giving up when we saw you two."

Buck took Anderson, who was in the last stages of exhaustion, on his left shoulder, and started ahead. Poor Olsen tried his best to follow, but he, too, was at the last extremity.

"Come along, Olsen, and I will give you a lift. Anderson, can you keep your head up?"

"I'll try, sir."

The two men kept their heads above water, and Buck began to push them both, first one, then the other. They seemed to make good headway at first, and Buck was getting in a good, strong stroke with one arm and both legs. But the headway soon decreased.

"It's been this way for a long time. I'm afraid we can't make it through this current inshore."

Olsen was getting discouraged.

"Oh, yes, we can," said Buck with confidence and vigor. "You get Anderson in tandem. I'll push with my head and use both hands and legs."

The new move proved of great advantage, and Buck summoned his whole strength.

"Come out to the end of the line, Preble, but tie it to your ankle."

The sight of Preble coming out with the line cheered the two exhausted men, and they tried to strike out for themselves. Olsen helped a little, but Anderson tried in

vain. He was fast drifting into unconsciousness, and could barely keep his head up. When Preble reached the end of the line, the swimmers were only about thirty yards away. Buck was making terrific efforts, but the current was running like a mill race. He cut the distance down to about twenty yards, but all his efforts could get them no farther. All began to despair but Buck.

"Olsen, you are a brave man. I'm going to take Anderson in, and then come for you."

"You are right, Mr. Jones."

It took Buck forty-five minutes to push Anderson across those twenty yards into Preble's reach, and when he came back Olsen had drifted nearly a half mile away. It took an hour and a quarter to push Olsen in.

When they reached camp, the surgeon took charge of Olsen and Anderson, and promised they would be all right next day.

"It was a catch, gentlemen," said the Captain, as he came upon Buck and Preble, "two seamen and a devilfish in an afternoon."

The octopus measured nine feet across his tentacles, and would have probably measured two feet more if one of the longest tentacles had not been left behind. The whole ship's company feasted on the soup and steaks of devilfish for three days.

At sunset the ship's company was assembled, and the Chaplain offered up prayers. Buck never realized so much before that man is but a waif on the ocean of infinity. At nightfall they lighted a big bonfire of driftwood, wreckage, and coal picked up on the beach. Before going off to their various tents and improvised shacks for the night, all hands gathered around the bonfire. Anderson and Olsen, fast becoming limbered up, told of their long sojourn in

the water, baffled by the heavy sea and the fierce currents, and of the remarkable coincidence of their meeting.

"How did you manage to get over those curlers, Mr. Jones?" asked Olsen with astonishment.

"I went under them."

"Mr. Jones doesn't swim, Olsen—he dives." And a smile played over Kelly's face, and passed to the others.

Buck listened to the men talking over the experiences on the topgallant forecastle—the steady grinding of the boilers, as the bow went down before their advance. His heart was too heavy to join them in speech, but they all knew the sorrow that was preying upon him, and in which they, too, shared.

The gathering did not linger long. The men had not been to bed for thirty-six hours, and had been under the severest strain. They soon dispersed to sleep on their sandy beds. When the others were gone, Buck went over to Olsen and Anderson.

"You saw nothing of Casey?" he asked, his face drawn with his sorrow.

"Nothing."

Both the seamen loved Casey, but they forgot their own grief when they looked into Buck's eyes as he turned away. He then went over to Kelly.

"Do you think there is any chance?"

Kelly knew what he meant, and shook his head.

"I paid out the line, Mr. Jones. Casey compressed his whole strength into the effort. When finally exhausted, he pulled the line, a signal of last good-by."

Buck turned away without a word. When all was quiet, and only the sentry was astir, Kelly slipped over to Buck's shack, but Buck was not there. He asked the sentry.

"He walked down toward the beach awhile ago."

Kelly went out to search. He discovered Buck's figure sitting on the sand, looking out toward the wreck. He saw him put his face in his hands and rock back and forth in silent anguish. Kelly walked up quietly and touched him on the head. Buck looked up.

"It's all right, Mr. Jones. He felt that his day was done. It was a noble death."

The sympathy in Kelly's voice was too much. It was like the sympathy his mother used to give. He broke down and sobbed as though his heart would break. Kelly tried to comfort him—in vain; the floods had broken through.

"He never knew how much I loved him. Why did I let him try before me? He was an old man; I ought to have tried first." His words came brokenly between sobs.

Kelly's tender heart could stand the strain no longer; he broke down and began to sob himself. He took Buck's hand and began to tell about Casey, between his sobs. The rugged seaman and the manly boy, holding hands on the beach, wept themselves out, while the lowering clouds marched by overhead, and the pitiless sea roared its dirge over the watery grave of their comrade.

The camp was astir at daybreak. The men missed the early coffee, but the surgeon prescribed a cup of boiling hot water, which proved a better substitute than anyone expected. Everybody enjoyed the devilfish steaks, and Preble and Buck were off before the rest of the fishing party. It had rained hard during the night, and all the receptacles were full of water. The hurricane, however, had subsided considerably, and was fast passing away to the north. The sun was breaking out at times. The two cadets went down to the lee side. Preble lingered to pick up some fine conchs that had been washed up during the night, and Buck went on ahead, line in hand. As he

passed the highest sand-dune, he noticed a big brown object, half covered in the sand.

"It must be a piece of wreckage," he thought, and was passing on when he wondered how the wreckage could have gotten so high up in the sand, over on the sheltered side.

"Perhaps it's from an *old* wreck, and is slowly disappearing in the sand."

His curiosity was aroused, and he went up and stood on the object and began to kick the sand off.

"It's round! What a remarkable color!"

The object began to move under his feet. Buck was petrified with astonishment. The sand opened and up stuck the monster head of a giant turtle, the red streak about its eyes flashing fire like a dragon. Buck jumped as though shot from a gun, and ran ten or fifteen yards, but soon recovered himself and turned back to reconnoiter. The great creature was leisurely working its flippers covering up the hole with sand. Buck cautiously drew nearer. It paid but little attention to his presence, continuing its work till completed, then turned down, with its slow, awkward stride, toward the beach. The sporting spirit began to assert itself, and to supplant the temporary paralysis produced in Buck by the sudden apparition. He ran down to head it off. The monster was waist-high, and came straight upon him, opening its great beak that was as big as a saucer. Buck drew his big knife, but jumped aside, afraid to remain within reach. The turtle passed on. Buck ran down in front of it again, only to step aside as it lumbered upon him with head raised and its beak opening and shutting like a gander's. Buck ran up from behind and struck at the turtle with his knife, under the shell near the right hind leg. The creature stopped and turned partly around, while Buck retreated. Then it resumed its course for the sea.

Buck became desperate. He ran and leaped upon the turtle's back. The turtle only looked up sidewise and continued its course. Buck steadied himself and got down on his knees, then spread out flat on his face and drew himself well forward, then raised upon his left hand and with his right hand made a fierce jab at the turtle's neck. Like a thunderbolt the creature snapped the knife out of his hand, breaking the blade and sending the handle flying. The twist almost dislocated Buck's elbow joint. He was baffled. He stood up on the back, impotent, while the creature began to lumber along toward the sea. He looked around, as though for a suggestion, and noticed the line coiled on the sand, where he had dropped it in the first dash of flight. An inspiration seized him. He jumped off, ran for the rope, and dashed back, fixing a noose and calling for Preble as he ran. To Preble, coming up in the distance, it was a strange sight—Buck balanced on the turtle's back, swinging the noose for its head. The turtle paid but little attention, and in a few trials Buck had the noose over its head and well up its neck. He pulled in gently and when the noose was about home, gave it a hard jerk, slid back on the ground, and began to pull. The turtle shook its head, pulled its neck in short, and went ahead, the rope passing over its back. Buck pulled with all his might, wrapped the line around his body, stuck his heels in the sand—in vain—the steed dragged him on.

"Hold to him, Buck—hold to him!" shouted Preble, as he came on a run. The two hauled together. In vain! Steadily they were dragged toward the water.

"Let's try him sidewise," suggested Buck, and they ran around and pulled together at right angles. The turtle began to turn.

"Keep pulling him to the side!"

And soon they had him turned entirely around; then

he began to pull backward and was gradually outpulling them.

"Get a pole behind him, Preble," said Buck, and Preble ran off and soon came back with a four-inch timber eight or nine feet long.

"Hurry up and get it behind him, Preble. He's been snapping, and has snapped one strand of the line in two."

Preble planted the timber, and the turtle backed up against it to a standstill.

"Prize him forward," cried Buck with delight.

The turtle was bewildered when Preble, using the pole as a lever, prized him forward. He started ahead, then attempted to turn. Buck stuck his heels in the sand and held him straight.

"Prize ahead, Preble."

The turtle started ahead and tried to turn again, and Buck held him straight.

"Prize away, Preble."

Soon they were making fair progress. The pole always bewildered the turtle, and they gained four or five yards each time they prized. Again and again the turtle balked and tried to turn, but each time the pole started him up again.

Buck regarded it as the proudest moment of his life when they "drove" the turtle into camp. Everybody suspended work. The Captain and officers and men alike rushed out.

"What's that you've got, Mr. Jones?" called out Kelly, smiling all over.

"Only a dray horse to do the heavy hauling. Preble, show his paces."

The company roared when Preble applied the pole vigorously and the great creature, as broad across the back as a barn door, literally paced down the line.

"It'll be great eating, Mr. Jones," remarked the paymaster, whose mind was bent on the question of provisions; "we'll credit you and Mr. Preble with a thousand pounds of fresh provisions. He'll weigh more than that."

Buck had slackened the line, and the turtle snapped at it and cut another strand; and snapped again, and the line parted. Then it began to look around, and started for the beach. Buck hurriedly tied another noose and climbed on its back, and soon had it lassoed again. It was like a circus exhibition. Buck stood straight up, steadying himself with the line, and the turtle ran its best.

"This is the only genuine bareback rider of sea monsters," Kelly called out, to imitate a circus announcement.

When he had ridden a hundred yards, Preble, with his lever, ran in front to turn him. The turtle seized the lever in its beak, overturned Preble and ran partly over him. Buck jumped down, ran to the side and turned the turtle half round, while Preble jumped up and began the prizing operation; and soon they had the bewildered creature back in camp.

"What shall we do with him, Preble? He'd tear down any shack here."

"There is no trouble about keeping him," said Kelly. "Send me your pole, Mr. Preble. Three or four of you lend me a hand. Let him start up, Mr. Jones."

As the turtle started, they put the pole across its route, and when it had just begun to pass over the pole, the four men raised it with energy and turned it on its back. There it sprawled, its legs and neck working in the air, utterly helpless.

"It'll stay there without any trouble, now, and it'll keep fresh for a month. There'll be no starvation in this camp," said Kelly.

"Where did you find him, Mr. Jones?" asked one of the men.

"We found him down there half buried in the sand."

Kelly laughed.

"I guess it's not a *him*—it's a *her*. That old turtle has probably been laying eggs in that sand pile for a thousand years."

Buck was off with a dash for the sand pile, and brought back Preble's hat full of big eggs. His delight was complete.

CHAPTER XX

BUCK HAS HIS FIRST COMMISSION AND MAKES HIS FIRST SPEECH

MR. JONES, I would like to speak to you a moment," said the Captain, as Buck put down the eggs with triumph.

Buck went over with the Captain to his tent.

"Roncador is far from the track of regular steamers. There is no telling how long we might be left here. I have decided to send a boat to Old Providence, and thence to Colon for succor. The navigator asks to take the boat. He has been sick for some time, and the surgeon pronounces him a sick man now. But he is anxious to do what he can. I have consented to let him take the boat. He wants a junior officer to go along, and asks that you be detailed. You have been under severe strain, and are entitled to rest."

"I am entirely rested, sir."

"The trip is uncertain. The carpenter's gang is patching up the skeleton of the sailing launch thrown up on the beach, and nailing on miscellaneous boards and planks, and will cover the seams with canvas; but it will leak badly and require constant bailing. If the weather is good, it may come out all right; if bad, probably not. Four men have volunteered. The boat will leave as soon as it is ready and the sea moderates a little more. Will you volunteer to go?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then report to the navigator."

The Captain bowed, and Buck went out and reported to the navigator.

"Inspect everything, Mr. Jones, and let me know when you are ready. I'm getting the navigating instruments ready. We have a boat compass, but I'll have to get together the fragments of a sextant and the scattered leaves of a Nautical Almanac and Bowditch Table. We'll have some difficult navigation."

Soon Buck was following up all the work of preparation, inspecting the carpenter's gang on the boat and mast, and the sailmaker's mates on the sail; the men getting fresh water breakers and provisions, including a big section of devilfish. He got the sailmaker's mate to sew up some canvas strips and make a pair of trousers and a canvas cap.

"You look like a prince, Mr. Jones, in your royal robes." Kelly had a good laugh at Buck's expense. "But I *prefer you* in the robe of a Fiji Islander."

Buck was anxious to navigate by the North Star. He hurried up the work, and at sunset reported to the navigator that all was ready on the lee side. The little open boat shoved off as the tropical darkness fell. The wind was blowing fresh from the west, direct ahead, so they stood away on the starboard tack, the navigator at the helm. The sea was running high, and the boat shipped a good deal of water. One man was kept bailing constantly, and at times two. The clouds were fast disappearing, and soon the stars were beginning to show through. The little crew watched the bonfire on Roncador till its glow disappeared below the horizon.

"I'd like to relieve you, sir," said Buck, to the navigator, about ten o'clock. "The doctor said you were sick.

You'd better sleep if you can. I'm going to watch the stars through to-night."

"We'll stand watch and watch, Mr. Jones. The shigras fever is in my bones, but I'm good for the trip all right."

Some planks had been nailed across the thwarts for beds. Two of the seamen stretched out on one side, the other two remaining on watch, one to bail out, the other to tend the main sheet. Soon Buck stretched out on the other side. Whether it was because of the activity during the day in the open air, or because he had become a seaman through and through, Buck fell asleep almost instantly, stretched out on a plank, without pillow, in a small boat being roughly handled in a sea way.

At midnight the sleepers were called and took the watch. Buck tacked, with the view of running the watch through on the port tack. The stars had come out in all their splendor. The clouds had disappeared. The boat heeled well over in the fresh breeze. Buck would put his hand out in the mild, tropical water. He felt an exhilaration from the sea, and the sky; he was so close, so very close, to them. He watched the constellations making their way across the heavens. About three o'clock the wind drew around to the northwest, and Buck went about. The navigator made a remark that showed he had not been asleep at all. So at four o'clock, when the two seamen were called, Buck left the navigator undisturbed, as he seemed to be dozing off, and he did not wake till about eight o'clock.

"I'm so sorry, Mr. Jones."

"No apologies, sir. I was enjoying myself so much I couldn't bear to stop."

They washed over the side in the salt water, ate some cold devilfish, and got comfortable for the day.

"I'll take the sights, sir," volunteered Buck, and he got a good time sight about eight o'clock, then a good meridian altitude. Locating their position on the soiled chart, they found they had made excellent progress. The wind was now around to the north, still holding fresh, while the sea was going down rapidly.

"If this luck continues," remarked the navigator, as he set a course by the boat compass, "we'll make Old Providence by five o'clock."

When Buck took the helm at noon, the navigator remarked that his fever was running high. Along about three o'clock he said it was running higher.

"If my temperature should make me delirious, have one of the men stay by me at Old Providence, charter the largest fishing vessel you can find, and start for Colon at the earliest practicable moment. After arriving, telegraph the Secretary of the Navy and charter a steamer to run to Roncador." And he handed Buck one hundred dollars in gold and the paymaster's draft for five hundred dollars.

It was magnificent sailing, and they reached the small fishing village of Old Providence about four o'clock. Unfortunately, the navigator had become delirious. Buck sent him ashore with a seaman to take care of him, giving the seaman thirty dollars for expenses. Then, with quick decision, he ordered a fishing vessel to go to Roncador with a load of fresh water, oranges, and fresh food, and by sunset he was off in a ten-ton fishing schooner, chartered for ten dollars per day. The wind was almost back to the northeast trades. The schooner was speedy. Straight on their course they held with all sail set, night and day. Buck took frequent sights, by day and by night. Each time he located his position it showed large gains. He made over one hundred and sixty miles the first day, over a hundred the second, and moored at the dock in Colon

shortly after sun-up the third morning. A magnificent experience! In supreme command! Buck had never enjoyed anything so much in his life.

He aroused the American Consul from bed; by ten o'clock had chartered the mail steamer *Panama*; and by noon was off for Roncador, after sending the following cable to the Secretary of the Navy:

"*Kearsarge* wrecked and destroyed on Roncador last Friday night. All safe ashore save Boatswain Casey, who met heroic death. Sailing to rescue in steamer *Panama*.

(Signed)

"B. P. Jones, Naval Cadet."

By the time this message reached America, the *Panama* was far on her way, and before sunset the next day the survivors were safe on board. She went over to Old Providence the same night, for the navigator, and started for New York, reaching there without incident the end of the next week. Buck's third class-cruise then came to a premature end.

A big crowd met the *Panama* at the wharf. The loss of the historic *Kearsarge* had produced regret all over the country. Buck's telegram had been the only authentic news, and many wild accounts had been published as emanating from Colon, so that the whole country was waiting, eager. The newspaper correspondents and reporters came down the bay in a tug to meet the *Panama*, and fell upon the officers and men of the *Kearsarge*. Buck had almost nothing to say; but by the time the vessel reached the wharf a hundred graphic accounts of the wreck and the sojourn on Roncador, colored by a score of vivid newspaper imaginations, were ready for the evening papers, and a vast accumulation of mail was sent ashore.

At quarantine, orders from the Navy Department were brought off, directing the officers to appear before a

Board of Inquiry, assembled at the New York Navy Yard, to inquire into the cause of the wreck. The enlisted men were ordered to the receiving ship *Vermont*, at the same yard, where they would be available for witnesses. The navigator had improved, but had to be sent to the Naval Hospital. Buck and Preble were surprised and delighted to see Mrs. Preble on the wharf. Buck's delight was almost as great as Preble's. Mrs. Preble could hardly contain herself. The thought of all that her boy had been through brought the tears constantly to her eyes. She told Buck that she had been in correspondence with his mother.

"I went to see the Secretary of the Navy," she said with enthusiasm, "and it has all been arranged. After the Court of Inquiry is over, you are both to have leave till September 30th. Bainbridge will go to Alabama with you the first half of the time, and you will come up to the White Mountains with him the second half. I have rooms for us all in New York while the court lasts."

The witnesses were called in the order of rank, so that Buck and Preble did not take the stand for a week. During this time they "saw New York." Preble had been to New York before, but the great city was a revelation to Buck. Mrs. Preble had secured quiet rooms, where the "poor boys" could rest; but the "poor boys" were not still a moment. Preble undertook to be the guide, but soon Buck was driving him into all kinds of strange places, particularly where engines and machinery were operating. They went to Coney Island and several of the beaches to swim and see the sights. Mrs. Preble was considerate enough to stay behind frequently, and have ice cream and good things when they returned.

"I've had the time of my life," said Buck, when she told them good-by and left them on the through sleeper for Birmingham.

It was a happy day when Buck and Preble reached Sumter. Half the town turned out to meet them. Buck's fraternity, headed by his oldest brother, Hugh, boarded the train at a crossing three miles above town, where the train stopped by agreement with the conductor.

"Fellows, this is Preble."

Buck looked out of both sides of the car at the same time, so as to miss nothing of the familiar scenes that made his heart leap.

"You see that clump of plum trees over there, Preble? That's where a fine covey of partridges ranges. I'm sorry it's out of the season."

Buck's glance passed on across the broom-sage field, turning a little wistful.

"Out there," whispered Hugh to Preble, "Buck accidentally shot his favorite dog, Hugo."

The train lost twenty minutes more at Sumter station. Captain Sled and his engineer and the agent had to join in the welcome. Half the stores in town were closed.

"Papa, this is Preble. Colonel Picket, my friend Mr. Preble."

Buck was beaming with delight, introducing Preble to his family and friends.

"Your mother is waiting to greet you at home, Buck," said his father. "She knew it would be so crowded here."

Buck broke away from the crowd, leaving Preble in Hugh's charge, and started down the railroad track on a run, then across the fields. He crowded through the old hole in the rear hedge, dashed down the slope, leaped the branch, ran up the other slope by the old smokehouse and chicken house and kitchen.

"How d'y' do, Aunt Becky?" he called out, but never paused. Up the back steps, across the back piazza, in the back door, down the wide hall, out on the front piazza.

"Mamma—mamma!"

"My Buck! My Buck!"

Buck took his little mother up in his strong arms.

"Where did you come from? I was looking for your coming from the big gate."

"I couldn't wait, mamma. I came across the fields." And Buck had the first ten minutes with his mother alone.

"How you have grown, Buck! You are as tall as Hugh. I would scarcely have known you—and you look like a man."

"You have to be a man at Annapolis," said Buck with evident pride.

Soon after the others came, Buck took Preble off to the lot to see Uncle Ben and the horses, then out to the pasture to see the cows, and then to the garden and to the watermelon patch.

"Hold on, Preble. That one's not ripe. Let's try this one." Buck thumped the biggest. "Let's bring it over here to the scuppernong arbor."

Buck raised the big melon and dropped it. It broke wide open, and the big red heart separated from the rest.

"Try this." And Buck handed Preble a big chunk of heart as big as his head, and the two fell to eating.

"I've never tasted anything so good," said Preble.

"It's the only way to eat a watermelon," remarked Buck knowingly, as he brought his face up, dripping.

They went through the orchard on the way to the house, and continued to stuff with apples and peaches and figs. Preble was particularly delighted with the figs.

Late that afternoon the whole town came down to Wildwood, old and young alike. Mrs. Jones had tea and lemonade and ice cream out under the big magnolia trees. All the ladies and girls were in white.

"We are sorry the magnolias are through blooming, Mr. Preble," said Mrs. Jones.

"It couldn't be more beautiful than it is," replied Preble with enthusiasm.

He thought he had never seen so many beautiful girls in his life.

"Every other girl you meet down here would be called a raving beauty anywhere else," he wrote his mother.

Mrs. Preble soon became anxious about her son's heart. He was accustomed to tell her everything, and he confided to her that he was in love with Miss Picket. Fortunately, he thought he was in love with three others in succession before he left. Buck was gallant and deferential to all alike. The two cadets were the lions of the town, and the envy of all the other boys, particularly on one occasion of ceremony, when they wore their full-dress uniforms.

Buck organized a summer baseball nine among the town boys, and got up a series of games with the neighboring towns; and Preble played first base while Buck caught.

Major Jones got up a camping trip up to the lakes, and the boys had a week of good sport catching trout, bream, and white perch, and in swimming and rowing. Buck showed the other boys many new points in swimming.

"Show us the stroke you used when you swam from the wreck."

Buck showed them the stroke, but remarked scornfully:

"You can't do anything in fresh water."

The second day in camp, Buck slipped off with Preble before daybreak, and they brought in a wild turkey each.

"It was terribly exciting. I had the buck fever, but I got my gobbler all right," Preble wrote his mother.

The boys had another camping trip on the river, which they enjoyed very much. Before the time for leaving, the

people in the country above Sumter, who all loved the Joneses, gave a barbecue and fish fry to the boys, out at Silver Creek. Buck and Preble were in high feather. After the delicious dinner, the crowd called on Major Jones for a speech. The major responded and made a rousing patriotic speech of about twenty minutes. They then called on the probate judge for a speech, and he paid a glowing tribute to Sumter's gallant representative in the navy. When he finished, the enthusiasm over Buck was running high. Suddenly some one called out:

"Buck Jones!"

It was taken up on all sides:

"Buck! Buck! Speech! Speech!"

Buck blushed red to the roots of his hair. His heart pounded hard against his breast. There was no escape. He rose.

"Friends and fellow citizens. A naval officer's business is to fight, not to talk." (Applause.) "If you asked me to climb that long-leaf pine I'd go up it willingly——"

"He could do it," ejaculated Preble enthusiastically, and the crowd roared.

"I'd gladly swim the length of the mill pond for you, but make a speech I cannot." (Great applause.) "I am very glad that my comrade and friend, the grandson of one of the greatest officers the navy has ever produced, is with us to-day, and I wish to thank you from the depths of my heart for your kindness."

"Hurrah for Buck!" they shouted, as Buck sat down.

He had scarcely taken his seat when some one called out:

"Preble! Captain Preble! Speech! Speech!"

Preble turned white, then red, then white again.

"Captain Preble! Captain Preble!"

The cries became more insistent. Cold perspiration began to stand out on his forehead. He wished that the earth might open and swallow him. Buck took him by the elbow and raised him to his feet, and supported him for a minute till he ceased swaying back and forth. He drew a deep breath as though to begin, then sighed, then drew another deep breath, then sighed again. His agony was becoming painful, when he finally broke forth:

"It's no use—I'm much obliged—but I can't speak—they don't speak in my country. All I can tell you is that Buck Jones would climb that tree if he decided, and he'd swim that pond, too. You can't kill him, and you can't beat him. He's true to the death."

Preble stopped abruptly and sat down. A tumult of applause followed.

"Hurrah for Buck and Captain Preble!" the shout went up.

The probate judge got up and went over with great dignity:

"My congratulations, Captain Preble. I consider your speech, for its length, the best effort it has ever been my pleasure to listen to."

And Major Jones came over and congratulated him, and thanked him for the kind words about his boy, and assured him that Buck reciprocated all his feelings of confidence and friendship. The country people crowded around to shake his hand.

"A great speech, Captain. We've known all these things about Buck since he was a little shaver. He'll show them more things up there yet."

The tall, grizzly justice of the peace delivered himself of these remarks with much importance.

An observant politician, who had been looking on, came up and congratulated Preble.

"You told them exactly what they wanted to hear, Captain. The people down here literally worship that boy. If you don't make him admiral up there we are going to make him governor of Alabama, or anything else he wants to be."

Preble wrote his mother a long letter that night, describing the whole thing.

"It gave me a new insight into the loyalty and devotion of the Southern people. And now, remember, mother, I have been promoted—promoted at the hands of the sovereign people. I am now Captain Preble."

In Sumter and the country round about, Preble was henceforward known as Captain Preble; and Preble's mother could not refrain, in her mother pride, from telling wherever she went of her son's success at the barbecue. So at the Naval Academy, in New Hampshire, and everywhere else, Preble from that hour on was known as Captain Preble.

The time drew near for them to leave. Major and Mrs. Jones wrote with them to Mrs. Preble asking an extension, but she had perfected all her plans and the day was fixed.

The Saturday before they were to leave, a great tournament was given in their honor, and knights entered from all the towns for forty miles around, bearing the colors of their ladies. Preble was not accustomed to fast riding, so Buck entered as his champion.

"Enter for yourself, Buck," Preble protested.

"No. I have no lady love myself, so I will bear your lance with ribbons of blue and white. We'll enter as the Knights of the Navy."

Preble blushed and acquiesced. Blue and white were the colors of the young lady, the third of the summer, that

Preble had lost his heart to. He was sure this was *the* one.

Buck came back from town about a week before the tournament and looked up his father, who was out in the grove with Preble.

"Papa, Garber of Marengo has entered. He's won in five tournaments in succession this summer, and he boasts that he is coming to Sumter especially to dash the pride of the Knights of the Navy. I think I'd better ride Prince. He's so sure."

Major Jones readily assented.

Every day, for the last week, Buck went out before breakfast to the lists in Cherry field, and practiced on Prince. The other local knights were constantly practicing, and by Thursday visiting knights began to arrive with their mounts. The town was gay with visiting young ladies whose colors were to be seen in the lists. By Friday night everything was ready. The grand stand was all decorated with flowers and wreaths, and the seats of honor were allotted to the young ladies whose champions were entered. The tables were constructed under the great trees and the pits dug, ready for the charcoal fires to barbecue the fatted ox and the lambs next morning. Friday night a reception was given at Wildwood to the visiting knights and ladies, the great ball in the town hall being set for Saturday night. It was a bright moonlight night, and Wildwood was at its best, with the six great white columns casting shadows across the wide piazza where couples were promenading back and forth. Preble had his sweetheart on his arm, and paused at the end of the piazza and looked out over the lawn, through the great trees, under the soft light. As the couple stopped, a mocking bird, on its nest in the magnolia tree above, began to sing; the song was a little subdued, in harmony with the

moonlight, but so sweet and clear and peaceful and joyous. Preble pressed his sweetheart's arm.

"Have you ever seen anything so beautiful—so romantic—so intoxicating?"

"It is very beautiful," she answered, "but not more beautiful, I fancy, than the moonlight on the ocean."

There is no doubt that Preble would have declared his love but for the interruption of the belle of Tuscarora, who came up on the arm of the Knight of Marengo to say good night.

"Let the blue and white beware of the crimson," was her parting warning.

When the guests had parted, Preble went over to Buck.

"See here, Buck, we *must* get that crown to-morrow. The crimson was flaunted in the face of the blue and white to-night. Blue and white, you know, are part of the navy colors."

"Yes, and they are the colors of somebody else," replied Buck with a teasing smile, as Preble blushed. "I'll do my very best, Preble, but I ought to have had twice as much practice. Garber was brought up on a horse, and they have a strain of thoroughbreds down below here. His mount is the equal of Prince, and younger—and possibly not so steady," Buck added slowly, as though planning his strategy.

When the trumpets sounded the preliminary blast the next day, the whole town and countryside, and hundreds of visitors from a distance, were on the field. The grand stand was one mass of white and colors; each lady had the ribbons of her knight. In the seats of honor the crimson floated out alongside the blue and white.

The first lot fell to the Knight from Marengo, and a

shout went up when he rode out on his black charger, poisoning his lance, with its crimson streamer.

"It makes me think of the days before the war," remarked Colonel Picket. "That knight looks like Pelham when he came here for a tournament in the summer of '59."

Horse and rider seemed as one—proud and confident and eager. When they turned upon the course they seemed to be shot from a cannon. The lance, in rest, seemed as steady as if nailed to a wall. Its point took ring after ring, clean, clear, with a click, down to the last one—a perfect joust, in record time. A shout went up, and cheeks glowed crimson with the crimson ribbon. Five more knights made their initial runs, all within the time limit, two of whom took all the rings. Buck was number seven. He appeared at the call, and the blue and white fluttered with high expectation, and a shout went up. Preble felt uneasy at the appearance. Both Buck and Prince seemed indifferent.

"That's Buck's way," remarked Major Jones, in an effort to quiet Preble's evident anxiety.

The trumpet sounded, and Buck went through on a good run, taking all the rings; but there was no show, and but moderate speed, leaving only a small margin of time.

"A tame run, compared with the crimson," remarked a citizen from Marengo proudly.

On the first runs, four out of ten of the knights took all the rings; all came within the time limit. On the second run the crimson made another brilliant record, taking all the rings, but dropping a little in speed. Buck was the only other knight to take all the rings. He made a conservative run, at a little higher speed than on the first.

On the third run the crimson was again brilliant, taking all the rings and going through at high speed. His

charger was white with foam, but again dropped a little in speed. Buck passed through and took all the rings, and again added a little to the speed.

The trumpeter sounded, and announced in the name of the judges that the contest was a tie between the Knight of Marengo and the Knights of the Navy, and that, by mutual choice, the crimson and the blue and white would ride it off forthwith.

The crimson went through with a dash and took all the rings, but lost a little more time. The blue and white followed, took all the rings, and gained a little more time. There was now no time for the grooms to rub the horses down between runs. The proud black charger came up blowing hard, started well, but slackened toward the end. For the first time its rider applied the spurs. The horse leaped like a deer—the lance missed the next ring. All eyes were riveted on Buck when the blue and white started. Prince was panting, but went at a tremendous speed. Just before the last ring, Buck's foot slipped the stirrup. He swayed—the lance missed.

Still a tie.

The excitement was at fever heat. Preble noticed the cheek of the lady with the crimson turn a little pale as her knight appeared, on his laboring charger flecked with foam, nostrils dilating at each breath. It is hard on a horse to go through the list three times on a hot day, with a good interval between each run; but the black had gone five times, each time at its highest speed, with no interval of rest since the third run. It started off at its best, only to slacken. The spurs caused a spurt, only to be followed by a slackening. Another spurt—a quicker slackening. The pace became ragged. The crimson knight missed two rings. He mercifully refrained from applying the spurs, toward the end. The time fell below the limit.

"Can the bay go through again?" was the eager question, as Buck appeared with Prince panting and covered with foam, but alert to his rider's every wish. Prince was guided by the neck, and Buck held a light rein, only pulling enough to steady him in speed.

Buck leaned forward, patted Prince on the neck, turned, leveled his lance, and went through like a shot, taking each ring with a clear, clean click. It was his best run. When the last ring slid over the point, a deafening shout went up. All the knights gathered on their chargers, lances in hand, in front of the grand stand, the panting black, with the crimson knight, at their head. The trumpet sounded. The proud bay, though reeking, came forth prancing. Its knight bore a wreath on the point of his lance. Through the lines of the others he rode, and deposited the wreath at the feet of the lady in the center.

"The Knights of the Navy, in homage to the blue and the white."

At the great ball that night, Preble, by the right of victory, crowned his sweetheart "Queen of Love and Beauty."

Buck and Preble had four vigorous and happy weeks in the White Mountains, fishing, swimming and tramping. Buck became very fond of mountain climbing. It was something like the sea, he thought, it lifted one up and made him think.

The last week of their leave they spent with a guide far up in the forests, near the Canadian border, and over in the State of Maine, looking for big game. It was the first time Buck had ever had a good chance at big game, and it was a thrilling experience. He persevered after Preble and the guide had stopped to camp, one day when they were on the trail, and was rewarded by getting a big bull

moose—the biggest that was killed that season. He barely escaped being gored by the animal after it was wounded. Only his presence of mind saved him; he put the final bullet through its eye at barely five paces, and stepped aside as the great animal passed beyond and fell.

Buck presented this moose head, and Preble presented a beautiful pair of antlers, to the Officers' Club at Annapolis.

Buck and Preble reported at the Academy September 30th, all bronzed, looking the picture of vigorous, robust health.

CHAPTER XXI

BUCK RETURNS TO ANNAPOLIS TO NEW DUTIES

THEY found that they had been assigned to the third division, with a room on the third floor of the New Quarters. By supper formation, all the cadets, except a few on sick leave, had returned. It was a great pleasure for Buck and Preble to go up and down the corridor, where the trunks were still piled, and into the rooms, saying "How d'y' do?" to their classmates as they stored their things away. There was all the news of the diverging cruises to exchange, and each one had individual experiences to tell. Buck found great pleasure in seeing the upper classmen, too, and felt very cordially even toward those who had hazed him the worst.

"They are all fine fellows. The mean ones were bilged," he said to Preble.

There was very little hazing of the new plebes. The court-martial and congressional investigation of the spring had taken the impetus out of this practice.

There was no call to study hours that first night, and after supper, when their things were all in place, Buck and Preble went down to the Old Quarters to see the first division. There they found their classmates all gathered in Pikeman's room. Buck was so glad to see everybody, he didn't notice the coldness of Pikeman and Ninman and many others.

"Well, Jones, you had your old luck this cruise, and

from the way you got into print I suppose you saved the ship a dozen times or so."

In his simple, warm-hearted confidence in everybody, Buck failed to notice the sarcasm in Pikeman's voice and the smile that went the rounds.

"We didn't have much of a cruise, and it was very hot; but Preble and I got ahead of you all on the matter of leave—we've had nearly two months and a half."

The next day was Saturday, and Buck inaugurated his study routine by preparing his Monday recitations Saturday afternoon. After supper his class had a meeting at which Pikeman was again elected president, and his lieutenants were elected committeemen. Catell and Knowlton came away holding Preble's arm.

"Did you ever see anything so cut and dried? Worse than any convention that ever was run by any political machine," remarked Preble.

"Yes, and they have a conspiracy against Jones. During the cruise, Pikeman had the class all to himself, and he was poisoning every man he could against Jones," said Knowlton.

"The whole purpose of class spirit is being perverted. The meanest men are the ones getting control," observed Catell.

But Buck was too busy to pay much attention to this drift of things. While he was delighted with the new studies of trigonometry and physics and chemistry, otherwise known as "skinney," he found endless trouble with mechanical drawing. It was not a matter of imaginative power, for he excelled in descriptive geometry, but it was the slow, mechanical execution. Though he gave extra time to it, as he had done to French the year before, the best he could do for the month was a 2.9; while he stood second in skinney, second in math and third in English

and French, he stood only fourth in his class, on account of mechanical drawing. Huff again stood first in everything but mechanical drawing, and stood near the top in that. Rix stood near the top in everything, including mechanical drawing, which put him second in the class; and Twisting, with a high mark in mechanical drawing and in everything else, stood third. Buck was greatly concerned, realizing that mechanical drawing would continue all the year, and that it had a large multiple; so he redoubled his efforts, making his *régime* even more rigid than for the year before.

He was greatly concerned, too, at the low marks Preble made in trigonometry and skinney, especially on the examinations, and he began to set aside an hour each day in which to coach Preble. This made a heavy drain upon his available time. The result was that, in spite of all he could do for the second month, though he stood first in math, he stood only fourth in the class; and Preble seemed to lose heart when he again went all to pieces on the math and skinney exams, so that in the former he came out unsatisfactory for the month. This only made Buck spur him on the more and give more of his time to coaching him. He even prevailed on Preble to stay with him Christmas Day to study for the trig exam the day after.

“Billy” Kendricks, the head of the department, had a way of testing the mettle of each class in turn. On this exam he gave five regular questions and a sixth question; the cadet could take his choice of the five or of the sixth, and if he tried all he would get the credit. Two days after the examination, the whole academy was astonished to learn that Buck had done the first five and then the sixth, and made a 4 on each, giving him an 8, or *twice* perfect on the examination, while even “Wooden” Preble

had made a good showing on the sixth and, though falling down on the five, had a 3.45 for the examination.

"That will carry him across the semi-an," said Catell to Buck, as he came up to congratulate him.

There had never been such a record on an examination in the annals of the academy. The sixth question is so designed as to be sure to require at least the whole of the time for its solution; but Buck, on Christmas, had discovered a short cut, by the use of a new formula, and had taught it to Preble. This formula became known as "Jones's formula," and soon took the place of the other solution.

Standing first in math, with such a lead, was a satisfaction to Buck; but his work in mechanical drawing was so low that he stood only third in the class.

He applied himself yet more rigidly. The grind was so great that Preble marveled.

"I don't see how you can keep at it so, Buck. I'm sick of it all, though I don't stay down to it half as closely as you do. Life is not worth living with such a continual, unending grind."

But Buck never let up. The *régime* took away his opportunity for athletics, and he even gave up looking on at the first half of the great football games.

"Not until I stand first," he would repeat to himself.

The most enjoyable recreation he had was the fencing. He took a fancy to it from the start. He liked single sticks, bayonet exercises, and broadsword; but his favorite was the foil, or small sword. He never took special lessons, not being willing to give the time; but showed such aptitude that, taking only the regular lessons, Corbezier soon rated him the first of his class, and in a few months the first in the Academy. He was the only cadet who had ever given Corbezier a "touché," and he had given him

three before the indoor drills were over. They begged him to go on to the intercollegiate fencing tournament at New York, but he refused.

"After I stand first," he said to himself.

As third classmen, Buck's classmates began to take an increasing part in the social life of the academy, most of them going to the hops regularly. Before the New Year's ball, Preble had fallen in love with a girl from Baltimore, and Buck threatened to write to the lady of the blue and the white.

"Skinny" Minerson, one of the smallest members of the class, became devoted to the "Scottish Lassie," who must have been at least six feet two in her stocking feet. Preble was urging Buck to come down to the semiannual ball.

"I'll give you two dances with the sweetest girl there, and then you can see Minerson and the Scottish Lassie try the two-step. It's worth a year of your life."

"The inducements are certainly great," Buck admitted, but he shook his head. "After I stand first."

On the semiannual examinations Buck made the highest marks, but his work in mechanical drawing was so low that he barely stood third in the class for the term. Preble had become so occupied and preoccupied with the girl from Baltimore that, in spite of all Buck's efforts and special coaching, he went to pieces on the examinations and came out for the term unsatisfactory in trigonometry, and with but a small margin in skinney.

"Preble," said Buck with great anxiety, "they'll doubtless carry you on till June; but you'll have to take a brace. You'd better cut out 'spooning' altogether."

"You are right, Buck; but I couldn't live without seeing the girl from Baltimore." Preble spoke with conviction.

"She's the fifth one, to my knowledge, you couldn't live without." Buck's voice had no sympathy.

Preble admitted the fact, and agreed with Buck that he would join him for putting in more time on trig and in the chemical laboratory, where Preble's work was especially weak.

Almost immediately after Buck's lecture to Preble about "spooning," he became involved in a "spooning" scrape himself.

Miss Minnie Simpkins had been down to a Saturday afternoon tea on the *Santee*, given by the captain's wife, and had hired one of the Annapolis hacks. It is not known which was the older, the hack or the spinster. It is said that those old hacks were some used in Colonial days. Certain it is they antedated the Civil War, for nothing like them has been constructed since the war. Gossip said that Miss Simpkins made her *début* yearly for the first fifteen years of the Academy's existence, after it was moved from Newport, and that the Superintendent before Rumsey had been engaged to her, when he was a cadet thirty-five years before. This, perhaps, justified Miss Simpkins in being somewhat shrunken and in being so prim and kittenish—and partial to cadets, particularly the young ones. She could not understand why the *dear* plebes were not allowed to go to teas and hops. At the *Santee* tea, she made little Billerson's heart flutter several times, and he came near being late for formation. She was feeling particularly content with the afternoon's conquest as her hack turned the corner at the Steam Building and started up Maryland Avenue, where the cadets were lounging on the seats waiting for supper formation. Even the din and jolting from the cobblestones failed to perturb her equanimity, except that she decided to reduce the jolting by bearing part of her weight on her feet. This

was a fatal decision, for without warning the floor fell through and she found herself running along the cobbles, with her skirts up in the hack. Her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth. The feeble articulations were lost in the din. An Annapolis team trots slowly, but to her it seemed to run. She saw the tumult among the cadets. She tried to scream. Then she tried to hide her face in her hands. At that instant, like a flash, rescue came. A manly figure in uniform dashed by and stopped the driver, then threw open the door, bowed low, and offered his hand to assist. It was all too overpowering. As she stepped up through the floor and put her foot upon the ledge and took the proffered hand, her spinster heart could bear no more. She swooned away and fell upon the manly breast of her rescuer, her head resting upon his shoulder. It was luckless Buck. He and Preble had been coming up from the chemical laboratory, and as they turned into Maryland Avenue they saw the strange spectacle of a pair of long thin legs in baby blue stockings and slippers twinkling under a hack. They both dashed to the rescue, but as soon as Preble saw who it was, and saw the laughter of the cadets ahead, he stopped and almost split his sides; but Buck rushed on. He heard voices saying:

“Jones to the rescue.”

“I’ll bet on Jones.”

But he paid no heed. When the fair spinster swooned into his arms, he gallantly bore her to the seats, amid the suffocated shrieks of the battalion.

Coming out from supper formation, Preble asked Buck if the engagement would be announced forthwith. When the gun fired that night, Preble turned to Buck with a solemn look on his face.

“Jones, you’ll have to take a brace. You’d better cut out ‘spooning’ altogether.”

In the chemistry course, the third class reached the composition and manufacture of explosives early in the spring. Buck was particularly interested in high explosives. Their terrific, irresistible power had a peculiar fascination for him. He made the regular experiments with the rest of the class, but in addition he and Preble went down Saturday afternoon to do extra work. Preble had become frightened at the prospect of bilging in June, and Buck had actually prevailed on him to give up witnessing the first boat race to come to the laboratory.

During the spring months it was hard work for Buck to keep up his rigid *régime* of study, particularly when it became clear that it was impossible for him to stand first for the year; and it was still harder to keep Preble at work, but Buck was unrelenting. He put in all the time, according to schedule, and gave about an hour and a half per day to coaching Preble. It looked fairly hopeful for Preble to pull through, provided he held his own on the annual examinations, and Buck gave up to him more and more of the time he held so valuable. It was all to no avail. About a week before the annual examinations, both the girl from Baltimore and Preble's mother came and camped out at Annapolis, in anticipation of graduation week. Mrs. Preble continually urged Preble to study hard and stick to his work, but as frequently had him out in town for dinner; her presence started the demoralization that the sweetheart completed.

Preble went all to pieces on the math and skinney exams, and came out hopelessly unsatisfactory for the year. His mother wanted to go to Washington to try to get him reinstated, or turned back again; but he knew, and Buck knew, that the case was hopeless.

On Saturday afternoon, when the marks were posted, Buck looked for Preble's first. When he saw them, he

turned away from the bulletin board and went to his room. The chagrin and sorrow were so deep in his heart that he forgot his own marks—forgot about everything. When Preble came in, he found Buck lying on the bed, with his hands under his head, looking up at the ceiling. Buck had been so busy, and kept so close to his room during the two years, that the storehouse of affection that would otherwise have gone out to many, had become concentrated upon one—and that one was now to leave. Life began to appear empty; even a great naval career seemed vain.

Preble forgot his own chagrin and disappointment when he saw the depths of sadness depicted on Buck's face.

"It was no use, Buck. It wasn't in me. I've been brought up wrong. I'd give everything else in the world to serve in the Navy all my life; but I simply can't get through the Academy."

Buck said nothing. Preble went out and sought his sweetheart, and buried his sorrow in her smiles. Buck lay for an hour looking up at the ceiling; then he walked over to the government farm. But no comfort came. At supper he scarcely spoke a word. An irresistible impulse came over him to do something to drown his sorrow. On the way to his room, he found Henderson and Knowlton in the corridor having fun with the whistle they had mischievously taken from the speaking tube that led from the third floor down to the officer-in-charge's office. Search had been made for two days to find the whistle and catch the offender. Knowlton had a most winning personality, and Buck liked him very much.

"See here, Jones. I dare you to put the whistle on the tube and call up the officer-in-charge."

Buck laughed and took the whistle, screwed it on, and

blew a loud whistle below. The officer-in-charge promptly answered back:

"Hello!"

Buck was a little puzzled, and repeated:

"Hello!"

Then the officer-in-charge asked:

"Who are you?"

"I am the whistle, and wish to report my return."

He heard the chair turn over down in the office, but waited no longer. Officer-in-charge, officer of the day, and orderly all came rushing up the stairs, and Buck and his crowd scurried to their rooms. Not a soul was visible in the corridor when the officials arrived; but there was the whistle.

In beating his retreat, Buck took refuge in Knowlton's room. Knowlton was always full of mischief, and when the whistle excitement had subsided he took from his wardrobe drawer a large flag, made of three quarters of a bed sheet, all painted black, with skull and crossbones.

"I've got this for the flag pole. Let's hoist it to-night, and it will be there in the morning. We'll pass the word that the Oyster Pirates have captured the Naval Academy."

Buck was electrified. Soon he was deep in the conspiracy.

"The watchman will see it early in the morning, and lower it before anybody else sees it. We'll have to nail it up." He meditated for a while. "Then they will probably get one of the seamen on the *Santee* to shin up for it. We'll have to do better than that."

Buck's imagination was fired. Soon his whole mind was concentrated on the capture of the Academy by the pirates. He suddenly recalled the skeleton used in the lectures on physiology.

"I'll fix it so no seaman will shin up."

He soon perfected his plans. Knowlton and Henderson aided. They slipped down the end stairway. Buck climbed up the trellis work on the hospital, raised the window with the dexterity of a professional burglar, secured the big skeleton in the surgeon's anteroom, and lowered it to Knowlton.

The night was dark. The conspirators began to feel uncanny with the skeleton. Knowlton, who was holding it up by the ring from the skull, intimated that it would be best to return the skeleton and try some other way.

"The orderly or the watchman is sure to catch us."

"No, indeed," said Buck, with determination. *"I'll look out for the skeleton. Go up to my room and get a sheet and bring it down. Take my shoes up."* Buck took off his shoes.

Knowlton brought the sheet, and the three rigged it up around Buck and the skeleton. Buck was already familiar with the skeleton, from the Friday-night lectures in physiology and hygiene. He stood behind and kept it upright by the ring.

"I'll fix up the jaw for an emergency."

In a little while they had the apparition completed, with the head arranged so that, with the hand not employed holding it up, Buck could slide the hood back and drop the jaw. To the astonishment of his accomplices, he announced that he would try it on the orderly.

"I'll come up from the rear. Get where you can watch the fun."

He had a little difficulty in making the apparition glide as he liked, but soon he became expert. After rehearsing, he learned to work the hood and jaw with precision.

Knowlton and Henderson slipped around the building,

and stood concealed behind a tree, where they could see the orderly walking up and down on the piazza in front of the entrance. Soon they saw a figure in white appear, at the other end of the building, close up to the side. As the orderly turned his back to walk in the other direction, it would glide along and stop. It drew up to within twenty or thirty yards, undetected, then stepped out in full view against the background of the night. There was a dead stillness. The orderly turned and walked a step, then halted, rubbed his eyes, took another step, and stopped, his knees shaking. The hood slightly opened, the outline of the eye sockets and nose pit appeared. With a shriek the orderly dashed into the hall and into the office of the officer-in-charge.

"A ghost, sir! A ghost!"

He was white with terror, trembling from head to foot. The ghost glided back, and was out of sight around the end of the building when the officer came out to examine.

"It's your imagination, orderly. You are probably wrought up by the ghostly tales of the Oyster Pirates."

Knowlton and Henderson ran around the other way and joined Buck.

"It works like magic. I was frightened myself," said Knowlton.

"So was I," added Henderson. "A little more and we would have run ourselves."

"Get your flag, a hammer and nails, and meet me behind the band stand. We've got to handle the night watchman at the Superintendent's house."

"Be careful, Buck. He's not afraid of the devil."

Buck glided along the rows of trees and reached the band stand unobserved. The others had not arrived. He decided the old Japanese bell was a better location, and took his stand there. Soon he heard Knowlton's whistle,

and answered back. He waited probably fifteen minutes, when he discovered the watchman coming up from Porter row. Buck kept behind the pillars of the belfry. The watchman turned in front of the Superintendent's house, and came straight down the walk that passed close to the bell. He must have been absorbed, for he noticed nothing until suddenly the ghost stood within five or six paces. Against the night, it looked seven or eight feet tall. The watchman stopped, petrified. The country round about was full of ghost stories. Stanly had scoffed at them; but, accustomed to the night as he was, he felt shaky when this strange, white object seemed to rise out of the ground. Stanly was an old soldier, distinguished for his courage and nerve, but there was a tremor in his voice when he challenged:

"Who goes there?"

No answer. A deathlike silence followed.

"I ask who goes there?" His voice quivered, but his hand went to his hip pocket, and he held his ground.

Another terrifying silence.

"A third time, I demand who goes there?" He drew his revolver.

The hood opened. His hand was palsied. The jaw dropped. The revolver fell to the ground. For the first time in his life, Stanly ran away from a foe, and made for the post. He ran like a deer, and never looked behind. Knowlton and Henderson rolled on the ground with laughter. There was no danger of interruption now. Buck shinned up to the top of the flag pole. It was hard work getting to the lower pole landing, about eighty feet up, and harder work still getting up the upper pole, seventy feet higher; but Buck made it. The two on the ground used the signal halyards to hoist the flag, and hammer and nails; and Buck nailed the great black flag, with skull and

crossbones, at the top. Next thing they hoisted the skeleton, all wrapped in the sheet, tied with yarn so as to show the skull and neck down to the shoulders. Buck cut off the halyards and secured the skeleton so as to hang just below the flag.

"The pirates have captured the Naval Academy," he remarked, as he reached the ground. "It only remains for them to issue their proclamation to the world."

They went back to Buck's room.

"Go and see Jerry. Tell him to come here as soon as he is through for the night."

The 9.30 gun had fired as Buck was shinning down the pole. It was nearly taps when Buck handed three telegrams to Jerry, the colored hall boy.

"Take these to the depot telegraph agent. Here's the exact change. Deposit them, and leave at once. Answer no questions. If you ever tell who sent you, I know a big ghost that will catch you."

The telegrams were identical, and were directed to the *Baltimore Sun*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Norfolk Landmark*. They read as follows:

"You may announce that we have captured Annapolis, and the black flag, skull and crossbones, now float over the Naval Academy.

(Signed)

"The Oyster Pirates."

As these daring marauders had been committing depredations up and down the bay and had recently disappeared in the neighborhood of the mouth of the Severn, a great sensation was produced at the newspaper offices. They printed the telegram with reservations, saying they had dispatched special agents to the scene. The *Baltimore Sun* got their man off on a special locomotive. It ap-

proached Annapolis a little after sun-up. Through his glasses, the correspondent saw the black flag in the distance. And what is that object hanging beneath? He sat down at the station and sent a five-hundred-word message, and the *Baltimore Sun* got out an extra.

"The most daring piracy in modern times. The Black Flag floats over the Naval Academy. The body of the Superintendent hangs below it, etc., etc."

There was the greatest commotion the next morning. The Commandant and Superintendent were in constant consultation. Everybody in the Academy, including the Board of Visitors and streams of people from out of town, were down looking at the remarkable sight.

One seaman after another was brought up to shin up, but each one, upon seeing the grewsome skeleton, shook his head.

On the way to church, the battalion marched under it. Telegrams began to pour in from all over the country.

"Is the black flag really floating over the Academy?" most of them ran.

The Superintendent became desperate. At dinner formation an order from the Superintendent was published, offering immunity to the cadet who perpetrated the deed, on condition that he would volunteer to get it down. On the way in, Buck fell out of ranks and reported to the officer-in-charge.

"I'll volunteer to get it down."

"Very well, Mr. Jones," said the officer-in-charge. "I'll report your offer to the Commandant."

The sensation of graduation week came when Buck shinned up the one-hundred-and-fifty-foot flag pole, after dinner, and brought down the black flag and skeleton, in the presence of five thousand spectators.

CHAPTER XXII

BUCK IS "PUT IN COVENTRY" AND WINS OUT

ALL during graduation week Buck tried to drown his sorrow at Preble's bilging. Finally he went to the June ball and danced till daybreak. But it was of no use. When his class, now second classmen, moved down on the *Santee* for summer quarters, everything reminded him of Preble. He gave no outward signs, but Catell and Knowlton and others knew that a void was left aching in his heart.

The ending of the third class year and the beginning of the second class year mark a distinct turning point in the life of a cadet. Without knowing it, he changes from a boy into a man, and is treated as such by the authorities. Many things considered natural and to be expected in a plebe or a "youngster" (a third classman) would be looked upon by everyone as undignified in a second classman, or a first classman. The basis for this is not so much the difference in age and experience, but the fact that when he becomes a second classman he begins to "come on duty," and to assume the responsibility of command.

Buck started out the second class summer in the usual way. He took a keen interest in the work in the machine shops, where he liked the faster and more precise work of the machine tools rather than the slower, tedious work at the bench. He liked the work in the blacksmith's shop

very much, particularly the welding and shaping of iron when hot; and he cared but little for the boiler shop, where the work was done chiefly with the cold chisel. He organized two baseball nines, to play a series of match games, and soon had two crews contesting in the shells. Things seemed to be taking their normal course, when, about ten days after the summer's work began, it became his turn to be coxswain of cutter Number Eight.

The detail officer always went out in a steam launch, and directed the exercises of the cutters under sail.

Before starting, he gave general instructions, and concluded:

"I wish particularly to impress upon the coxswains that they are in command. Let each one look upon himself as he would if in command of a ship in squadron maneuvers. He is not only responsible for prompt and accurate execution of all orders, but for the maintenance of order and discipline on board."

The flotilla tacked several times with maneuvers in quick succession, and then stood out for a long stretch, toward the bay. As had been the custom on the previous days, Pikeman and Ninman, and two or three others, when work was slack, got out tobacco and began to roll some cigarettes.

"There will be no smoking in cutter Number Eight this afternoon," said Buck.

They saw the way his jaws closed down, and with a scowl all put their tobacco up but Pikeman.

"I guess I'll smoke as usual," remarked Pikeman, as he continued to roll his cigarette.

Buck said nothing. Pikeman deliberately lighted the cigarette, drew a big mouthful of smoke, and puffed it up in the air. At the first puff, Buck put the helm down and swung out of the line into the wind.

"Man the brails!" he ordered. "Stand by the sheets and halyards!"

The crew obeyed the orders, wondering what Buck intended to do.

"Let go the sheets and halyards; brail up!"

When the sail was all in, Buck rose from the stern sheets, left the tiller and walked across the thwarts and stood over Pikeman.

"I'll give you a half minute to throw that cigarette overboard."

Pikeman was nearly four years Buck's senior, and still about an inch and a half taller and fifteen pounds heavier, though Buck had been catching up rapidly since the entrance examinations.

"I'll not throw it overboard."

Pikeman drew another puff and stood up. Buck grabbed at his wrist. Pikeman anticipated the move, and jerked his hand behind him. Buck grappled him. Pikeman grappled, still holding the cigarette. It was perhaps his determination to hold on to the cigarette that caused him to be at a disadvantage and to fail to notice that Buck rolled him against the gunwale, and then, like a flash, rolled him overboard. Pikeman came up sputtering and swearing, and started to grab the gunwale, to climb back, but Buck pushed him back.

"Let me on board!" he roared with rage.

"Not until you say no more cigarettes."

"Are you men going to stand there and let him drown a man?"

No one made a move. They saw the flash in Buck's eye, and knew he would have tackled them all if necessary; but what cowed the whole crew was the consciousness that he was in the right. Again, Pikeman tried to climb on board, only to be rolled back.

"When you hold up your hands and swear that there will be no more cigarette smoking, I'll let you on board, and not till then."

Pikeman saw the launch in the distance, coming down upon them. In impotent rage he held his empty hands up, and gave the promise and then took hold of the gunwale. Buck helped pull him on board, then took the helm.

"Man the halyards! Clear away the brails! Hoist away! Hold the jib sheet out to windward! Draw jib! Haul flat aft!"

And the cutter stood back toward her position in the line. The steam launch soon came steaming up close alongside and slowed down.

"Why did you drop out of line, Mr. Jones?"

"To quell a mutiny, sir."

"Did you quell it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you any reports to make?"

"No, sir. The matter of discipline has been settled on board."

All the rest of the drill Pikeman shivered, and to himself swore revenge.

The officer steamed away, and murmured to himself:

"Young Jones has caught the spirit of the service. He's ready for responsibility. Rather direct in his method," he added, and smiled as he thought of the man he had seen go overboard.

Coming out of the old mess hall after supper the next day, Buck noticed Pikeman and the committeemen going upstairs to the model room, and supposed they were holding a meeting to consult about the selection of a class ring, that was under discussion. Before taps it became generally known that Buck's conduct as coxswain was the subject of discussion, and that it was finally agreed that the



"Buck . . . like a flash, rolled him overboard."

action of the committee would be postponed till after Buck's first tour of duty, which would come the second day afterwards; and if Buck continued to violate the customs and practices of his class, that a class meeting would be called to "put him in Coventry." There had been but one case of a cadet being put in Coventry since Buck entered. That occurred while he was a plebe. One of Jo-Jo's gang cheated in a game of poker. The game was clandestine, and the participants decided that they would not report the matter to the authorities, but would report it to the class. The class promptly put the offender in Coventry, and not a soul spoke to him from that time on. Buck remembered the look of scorn as everyone turned away. This appeared to him as the most terrible punishment possible on this earth. Perhaps it *was* the most terrible. The outcast could not stand it long, but soon sent in his resignation. All during the day following the committee meeting, Buck looked depressed and preoccupied. He went about the practical work in a stolid, mechanical way, and when work was over, instead of going out with the baseball nine, he took a long walk across the Severn.

When he heard the detail read out for the following day, "Officer of the day, Jones, B. P.," he felt as though fate was pronouncing some terrible doom. It was an overcast afternoon, with black, tragic clouds out toward the horizon. The face of the earth and of the heavens seemed weird and dark and threatening.

"Officer of the day. Officer of the day. I'm to be officer of the day. What shall I do? What shall I do? What shall I do?" He kept repeating the question, but no answer came from the water, the land, or the sky.

He walked on and on, only getting back in time for supper formation. During supper he made an effort to appear light-hearted, but his heart was as heavy as lead.

For two hours after dark he walked up and down the sea wall, from the *Santee's* wharf to the Marine Barracks, back and forth, where the water ripples licked the stone; but no answer came from out the night, any more than from the day. The boy's experience during those hours was the bitterest he had ever known, so bitter, indeed, that its impress remained upon his soul for all time. Presently, the gun fired, and after a while he went aboard. The warning bugle sounded—and taps. Everything seemed strange. He turned into his hammock, but not to sleep, for tumult reigned within. All seemed chaos and confusion.

“Why can't I do like the rest?”

Buck was warm-hearted and full-blooded, and loved people and company, and loved for others to think well of him and like him. He was really, now, for the first time, getting a chance to see his classmates intimately, as they were all gathered on the *Santee* together. It is the summer of the second class year that puts the seal upon the deep attachments of classmates at the Naval Academy.

Buck's affections had first gathered around Casey, then around Preble; and now they were spreading out to cover his classmates generally. The world seemed bright and fair. He had begun to walk arm in arm with Billerson and Henderson and Thompson, and a half dozen others, besides Catell and Knowlton. During the hard months of perpetual study, his heart had been under repression, and he had begun to feel that the summer would be the happiest of his life.

“Why can't I do like the rest? It has come to be the universal custom. Probably the authorities themselves don't really expect you to report your classmates.”

But there was no relief, no rest. He heard the bell strike five, then six, then seven, then eight—and he was

still tossing. He heard it start up one, then two, then three, then four—and still there was no rest for his body, no peace for his soul.

"They ought not to require you to sign the statement that you have reported all infractions of the regulations. The signature is under compulsion. The statement cannot be binding."

But still he tossed, and he heard the bell strike five, and then strike six.

"What does it all mean? Where am I?" "You are in the naval service," the answer seemed repeating itself. "And you are to be on duty—on duty! . . . God help me, I'll do it. I'll do it. I will, I will, though the heavens fall!"

It was about 3.30 in the morning, when, following upon his absolute resolve, a wonderful peace came over Buck and he fell asleep.

Buck was called thirty minutes before gun fire, and was soon at the desk of the officer of the day. He put on the sword—the first time he had ever worn a sword—with a solemn feeling of responsibility. Shortly after gun fire, the hammocks were brought up. Buck thought they had all gone up some time before, when Henderson came loitering along, six minutes behind the time allowed for hammocks.

"Mr. Henderson, I must report you for being late with your hammock."

It cut Buck to the quick to do this. He saw a frown come over Henderson's face. Buck turned to the desk with a weight on his heart, as he wrote Henderson's name on the report. While he was writing, he heard Henderson's voice down the hatch:

"Pikeman, you are right. Jones is as mean as they make 'em."

A few minutes later, Pikeman and Ninman came up the hatch and sauntered along the deck, talking with animation. When they were close to Buck, Pikeman spoke up, in a voice loud enough for Buck to hear:

"Let's go down to the washrooms, where the fellows are having a smoke."

Buck paid no attention. It was not part of duty to overhear, or to act on information overheard.

When Pikeman joined the group down in the washroom, they called out:

"Where's your fish?"

"The sucker wouldn't bite," he answered with a scornful laugh.

Pikeman and his lieutenants had gathered together nearly all the members of the class that smoked, and were trying to lure Buck down to the washroom.

"Let's poke our heads up the hatch and see what he will do."

As Buck looked around, a moment later, he saw four or five faces turned up the fore hatch, sending puffs of smoke upward. He rose promptly and went to the fore hatch, and down it, into the washroom, into the midst of the gathering. The smokers made no effort to conceal their cigarettes. Pikeman and the committeemen smiled.

"I will put you gentlemen on the report for smoking." And he took down the names of twenty-one in all, then went up the hatch.

"That was the happiest moment of his life," said Pikeman. "He would go to any length to get a chance to report a classmate, and curry favor with the Superintendent and Commandant."

At breakfast formation five were late. Buck reported them all. Then Millerson, the dude, asked for permission to fall out. Buck granted the permission, but added:

"Mr. Millerson, I will report you for wearing that nonregulation blouse."

Millerson went away furious.

"He must have been lying in wait for me."

All through the day the reports accumulated. In fact, the custom of not reporting one's classmates had caused great slackness in discipline, until the regulations were practically suspended, except when the detail officer was around; and cadets, ordinarily careful when in winter quarters, had become careless from habit. That night it took two of the big pages to contain the reports. There were more for this one day than for all the previous two weeks combined. Catell was the only man not reported. His habit of being careful was proof against all relaxing influence. The long enjoyment of immunity had brought many to think that they had a right to it. Pikeman and his lieutenants were indefatigable, going about among those enraged, attributing mean motives to Buck.

"He wants to show off his authority. He's working for promotion."

"He hates the class, and is taking it out this way."

"He thinks he is the whole thing—greater than the customs, greater than the class."

"He certainly soaked it to you—and without any warning."

Such were the suggestions. The class was furious. Pikeman, as president, issued a call for a class meeting at nine o'clock. Buck was still engaged copying up the reports of the day when Ninman came up to the desk.

"Mr. Jones," he began. Buck looked up. "I have been sent as a committee to notify you that the class has put you in Coventry."

Buck said nothing, but turned back to the desk and resumed his writing.

"What did he say?" inquired several, as Ninman came back.

"He practically told me to go to ——."

It took Buck till nearly eleven o'clock to finish up the report. Between names, he would repeat to himself, "In Coventry." He would pause now and then and look up, and repeat, "In Coventry." When the gun fired, it echoed, "In Coventry." The bugle at taps quivered, "In Coventry." The glinting water, out of the gun port, spoke, "In Coventry."

When he finally signed the statement that he had reported all infractions of the regulations, a sense of deep relief came over him, but upon its heels came the pursuing memory. He unlashed his hammock in a mechanical way, half dazed, fixed the stretchers, and leaped in, more from force of habit than for any purpose. As he leaped, it occurred to him that he had more room than usual. Those on each side of him had moved their hammocks away. A comfort came to him from out the infinite space when he lifted up his heart:

"O God! I've tried to do my part."

At gun fire, Buck leaped out and began lashing his hammock vigorously.

"Good morning, Billerson. It's a fine day," he called out heartily.

Billerson turned his head and ignored the salutation. The terrible reality rushed back upon Buck. He was in Coventry! When he carried his hammock on deck, passing his classmates coming and going, there was a glassy stare as eyes met only to turn away. When he began washing, the basin on each side was left vacant, as though he were a leper. At breakfast formation no one would fill the file in rear of him, and it was left vacant. At the table, the men on each side edged their chairs away. Walking back

to the *Santee*, those that were near slackened to let him pass on. In the blacksmith shop, where he and Henderson had been working together on a large weld, Henderson obtained a shift of work and left Buck working alone. In the cutter drill, the coxswain assigned him to the bow, where he would be alone. When drill was over, he started out for a walk, passing by the baseball field. The sides were choosing up, and the moment he appeared the whole thing stopped; they were ready to disband if he should pause; but he passed on and then they went ahead. When he came back he wanted a swim, and jumped in some little distance from where the others were bathing. The instant he came in, the others went out. When he turned in that night, he counted up, and found that he had spoken just seven words all day, since his forgetful salutation to Billerson. Five of those words were to the blacksmith; the other two were official. The next day, he spoke but three words altogether, the next day none. He went about in silence, treated with scorn and contempt.

No cadet has ever been able to endure for any length of time being put in Coventry at Annapolis. It is a punishment beyond anything conceived of elsewhere. Pike-man's crowd expected to see Buck resentful and angry at first, then sullen, then melancholy; and then they expected him to resign. They were surprised to see him go his way, holding his head and eyes erect, as he carried out a routine. He took an hour's walk, a half hour in the gymnasium, and a twenty-minute swim each day, and twice a week he took a horseback ride, sometimes as far as Whitehall; and during the other spare hours, especially between supper and taps, he studied and read some interesting books, notably the classics and the standard novels he had never had time to read before. He began to delve into the

theory of the steam engine, and to take up theoretical naval architecture and nautical astronomy. The subjects came to have a fascination for him. Huff and Rix became uneasy, and began studying the textbooks for the following year, work that they found great drudgery, while the others were at sport or recreation.

Pikeman became anxious lest the Coventry should fail of its purpose. He noticed Buck's steady, firmly closed, silent lips, but he failed to detect any gloom or depression.

One day he and all the others were confounded as Catell came on duty, and, from the morning gun, began to report everybody, whenever there was an infraction of the regulations. Several times committeemen went to him and warned him. At nine o'clock the class met and put him in Coventry.

Buck had just gotten off to sleep when he was awakened by a shaking of his hammock. He looked up. It was Catell, unlashng his own hammock close by.

"I've come over to join you, Jones. I didn't have the courage the first time; but ever since they put you in Coventry I have been impatient for my turn for duty to come again."

Buck now had a companion, sent, as it seemed to him, from heaven. They had been good friends before, but new and wonderful ties now came to bind them. Buck felt it was almost worth the loss of the friendship of all the others.

The following week a bomb was thrown into the group of Pikeman's friends, when Knowlton began reporting right and left. They put him in Coventry, also, and that night he swung his hammock alongside of Buck.

"It's a mean, false class spirit that would put a man in Coventry for doing his duty," said Knowlton.

The dual fellowship became triple, and Knowlton, with his gay nature and fun-making talent, soon had the three almost as bright as the rest.

It was utterly beyond Pikeman's comprehension when, a few weeks later, Billerson reported everybody, only to be put in Coventry with the other three.

Two days later, Craney, one of the committeemen, followed. Next came Davenport, then Eberhart, then Fulton, then Henderson himself. Every few days there was a new recruit, and when the summer closed there were nineteen men swinging with Buck. They were doing the best work. They had gotten up two baseball nines among themselves, and they all agreed that the latter part of the summer was the happiest. They were a concrete illustration of the great fact that the highest and truest happiness, even for youth, can only come in the path of rectitude and duty.

"I can tell by the way a lot of those other fellows look that if they had come on duty again they would have joined us," remarked Craney, as they were breaking up to go on leave.

"Yes, I agree with you, Craney," replied Buck. "If the summer had lasted long enough we should have had a big majority of the whole class."

The summer was an unusually hot one, and Major Jones carried his family to the mountains of North Carolina, where Buck joined them, bringing Catell and Knowlton as his guests. The spirit of the mountain climber, which had taken root the previous summer, in the White Mountains, came over him strongly again, and he put in his vacation organizing one trip after another—up Mount Mitchell, to the Roan Mountains, to the Smoke Mountains, and all through the Sapphire Country. He and Catell and Knowlton caught mountain trout in the smaller

streams, took dips into the Swananoah and French Broad, and reached the waters of the Yadkin.

When they told the family good-by, Catell and Knowlton declared that it had been the happiest month of their lives, and perhaps it had. The three young men had reached a plane of friendship attainable only with a common experience of sacrifice in a noble cause, and a comradeship in a noble resolve.

CHAPTER XXIII

BUCK BECOMES NOTED AS A GHOST CATCHER

WHEN they reached Annapolis they found the Academy all excitement. On account of the growing tension with Spain over the Cuban insurrection, the Navy Department was adopting the policy of putting more ships in commission, making an increasing demand for officers. The graduates of the previous June had proved inadequate to meet the demand for junior officers. The Navy Department had, therefore, directed that half of the first class be graduated in February, the other half in May, and that the summer cruise be omitted the following year, the second class to be advanced to first classmen in May, and to be graduated the first of December.

The Superintendent had appointed a board of officers to revise the course to meet these requirements. Their report had just been completed and approved. The cadets returning were discussing the outlook. Some were excited, thinking that war might come immediately and leave them at the Academy. All were eager to move forward. It is remarkable how an eager and willing spirit can accomplish tasks otherwise impossible. It is no exaggeration to say that the eagerness and willingness of the cadets, at the prospect of war, caused them to accomplish more in one year than they would otherwise have accomplished in two years.

Catell and Buck had agreed to room together, and it made a strong combination; Catell, with his care and precision and neatness, was a help and supplement to Buck, whose hold on mathematics and the heavyweight problems was a supplemental help to Catell.

The second class year at the Naval Academy is by all odds the hardest year in studies. Buck's second class year was doubly hard, the class covering the whole year's work in about two-thirds of the time.

Buck inaugurated the old routine for putting in the maximum of time. The result was a surprise, even to Buck himself. When the marks were posted, at the end of the first month, he stood first in mechanics and applied mathematics, first in steam engineering, first in calculus, and second in international law, which put him first in the class by an enormous lead, Huff coming out second and Rix third. The next month, Huff and Rix strained every nerve, but in vain. They were all on an even footing, now, in new fields. Buck's powers of concentration and mental discipline were unmatched, and his methodical habit of hard work could not be equaled. The result was inevitable. Month after month he came out first, each time with a larger lead.

The first class was unusually small in numbers, so second classmen were put on as officers of the day at the Old Quarters. Both the Commandant and Superintendent were struck by their efficiency and devotion to duty. Those who had come over to Buck's side in the summer were not the only ones, but one after another of those remaining took up the same practice of exacting strict compliance with regulations, from all alike. There was no effort to put them in Coventry, and gradually the whole Coventry structure fell to pieces. Pikeman was slowly losing his hold. One adherent after another abandoned

him. But he counted on his original group, with Ninman at the head. The third month, it happened that Ninman was section leader and Pikeman was in the section. One day, the section was surprised when Ninman announced that thereafter there would be no more talking and studying in the fourth section on the way to and from recitation.

When the section was about half way down the walk, Pikeman, as usual, opened his steam book to do some last studying.

"Pikeman, close that book," Ninman ordered.

Pikeman paid no attention to the order.

"I mean what I say. Close that book."

"You go to ——." And Pikeman continued with the book open.

When the section was finally dismissed, Ninman went to the officer-in-charge's office and handed in reports against Pikeman: 1st, for violation of regulations, reading book while in section; 2d, for disobedience of orders, keeping book open when ordered by section leader to close it; 3d, conduct prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline, answering back in unbecoming and defiant language when given a lawful order by his superior in command.

These reports produced a sensation. Ninman went to the committeemen, and a class meeting was called that same night, after gun fire. Pikeman was deposed from class president, and Buck was elected president by acclamation, amid unprecedented enthusiasm. The next day, the Superintendent wrote to the Navy Department, reporting Pikeman's case, and recommending his dismissal. Two days later an order was published at dinner formation, dismissing Pikeman "for the good of the service."

After the first term, Buck began to take up sports.

He could do it, now that he stood first!

Soon he was catcher on the baseball nine, and just before the first match game they made him captain. He thought that baseball was enough, but they all insisted on his pulling in the boat's crew, and when he finally consented they made him captain. He put his crew into wonderful condition, pulled the stroke oar himself, and arranged to have a long course decided upon.

When the first part of the first class graduated in February, fifteen of the second classmen, headed by Buck, were made noncommissioned officers in the battalion, whereupon Buck applied himself to the study of tactics for infantry and artillery, though these studies would not come till the first class year.

When the final graduation of the first class took place, in May, Buck was chosen cadet lieutenant commander. It had been a swift, vigorous, strenuous second class year, crowded full to the very brim. Buck was first in athletics and sports, first in discipline, and first in each and every study.

The graduating exercises took place Friday, and the following Monday morning the new academic year began. Buck's class was launched at once into the study of navigation and surveying, seamanship, naval architecture, and shipbuilding, ordnance and gunnery—studies which literally fascinated Buck. He had been thrown with their practical application so much, on his cruises, and had gone into them to such an extent, that, though his classmates groaned under the long lessons, he found but little difficulty, and mastered them easily. He was particularly interested in the handling of the battalion. Command seemed to come to him like second nature. Perhaps he had inherited the quality from a long line of forefathers; and it had been quickened by his course of obedience. From the first formation after graduation,

when he took charge, he seemed perfectly at home. The orders were given as though he had had a long experience. His physique helped him out in this. He was now climbing up to five feet eleven inches in height, and weighed one hundred and sixty-eight pounds, as solid as steel and as straight as an arrow. His voice was wonderful for giving orders. Without effort he could give an order that could be heard for half a mile. Frequently, the officer in charge of artillery drill, if the bugler happened to be off for the moment, would call on Buck to give the command, and his voice would sound clear, above all the din of a charge. Furthermore, Buck's spirit of discipline and devotion to duty had been transmitted from his own class through all the classes, and permeated the whole corps.

Early in June, the country around was stirred, as in the previous year, by accounts of the depredations of Oyster Pirates, who did not hesitate to murder or drown the oyster fishermen they fell upon. As in the previous year, the pirates had committed the most appalling murders, and then had been chased by revenue cutters and disappeared in the neighborhood of the mouth of the Severn. By direction of the Secretary of the Navy, the Superintendent sent out an expedition in search. A six-pounder was mounted on the bow of the *Standish*, and a gun's crew of first classmen was selected to man it, with Buck in charge. The head of the Department of Ordnance was in command of the expedition. For three days they steamed up and down, for fifty miles on each side, and around Kent Island, but found no trace, and returned.

The search was finally abandoned by the revenue cutters as well. The routine work went ahead as usual.

The incident, however, gave an impetus to target practice, and Buck headed a movement that ended in the Navy

Department allowing a special supply of ammunition, all the way from the thirteen inch on the monitor, down to the pistol. He took delight in eliminating all the errors, one by one, with each caliber, until he could score a bull's eye with astonishing frequency. The Superintendent reported his scores to the Navy Department; and before long the Department wrote to inquire if Cadet Buchanan Jones was sufficiently proficient in studies to be able to spare the time to enter with one of the Navy teams at the great shooting match at Seagirt. The Army had won the last two championships, the militia the previous one, and a private citizen the one before that; the Navy hadn't won for five years.

Buck got permission to go on three days ahead of time. He was in wonderful physical condition, and the constant salt bathing had kept his eyes in splendid condition. For three days he practiced on the range, testing the influence of all the air currents, of all the cloud and sky effects, and light effects on target and on his sights.

It took a week to finish the first series, which eliminated all but ten. Buck was number seven among these.

The course was made more difficult, the ranges increased, with more skirmish runs, and rapid firing. This series eliminated all but five. Buck was number three among these. The next series was likewise made more difficult, a large part of the firing being done at eighteen hundred yards. It left but two in the contest. Buck was Number Two. A sergeant of regulars was Number One, and had been Number One in all the contests from the start.

The judges decided to put these two to the test that had never been tried except in the international contest in Germany. The firing opened at twenty-four hundred yards, and the skirmish run began six hundred yards

earlier than in the preceding test. The sergeant was panting heavily by the time he reached the middle of the course. When he finally fired his last shot, he fell exhausted. Buck never opened his mouth once, and ended in comfort, breathing long, deep breaths, though he had considerably lowered the time of the sergeant. The crowd surged to see the target.

Upon examination, it was found that Buck had broken the record and set a new pace for such contests. Cablegrams of inquiry as to the methods and measures began coming in from all the military centers of the world. The answers ended by stating that "the young cadet has not yet reached his eighteenth birthday."

When Buck returned to Annapolis, he applied himself to the lost work, made it up, entered the regular examinations, made the best marks in all of them, though he had lost fifteen days, and stood first for the month in every study. When the weather became hot, the evening study hour was made later—eight o'clock instead of 7.30, and in the long twilight after supper Buck and Catell and Knowlton used to stroll over across the government farm, enjoying the cool of the evening. One day they wandered up the river, and were coming back across the farm well after dark, when they were startled to hear strange noises as they passed near the old Government Hospital that had been closed since the Civil War. It was a dark night, and everything was ghostly among the black cedar trees around the hospital. The noises seemed to come from the basement. The three cadets stopped and listened. The noise was weird, and seemed to be approaching.

"It's ghosts," whispered Knowlton, with a tremor in his voice.

At that instant something white appeared from behind the corner of the hospital. With one impulse the cadets started forward on the run. They didn't stop to look back, but flew across the fields and over the hill. When crossing Graveyard Creek bridge they quickened their pace, for the bridge creaked, and the white tombs in the distance seemed to be coming toward them. They fairly flew, and did not stop till they were safe inside the Academy grounds, with the sentry and watchman between them and their pursuers. Soon they began to feel a little ashamed, Buck especially. He had more speed, and at first had dashed ahead of the others; but he concluded, and Knowlton also, who was faster than Catell, that all three had better remain together.

They told of their adventure, and several classmates began to twit them.

"All right, I dare you fellows to go over there tomorrow night," said Knowlton, with defiance.

They accepted the challenge, and next night a party of five others went over about 7.30 o'clock, only to come flying back faster than the first, telling wild tales. One of them had almost been seized by a ghost. They all made a very narrow escape.

The next night a party of ten went over, with the same result, and the stories grew. Soon it was discovered that the gymnasium was haunted, and the old houses in Annapolis, and out in the country around Annapolis. A ghost epidemic passed over the land.

Buck had become thoroughly ashamed of himself for running as he did. His conscience seemed to trouble him. Finally he decided, as punishment, that he would make himself go over and see it out. So he slipped off alone one night. He trembled a little as he crossed the bridge, but never changed his steady walk. His heart began to

beat fast as he approached the hospital. It looked more weird and ghostly than before. His legs almost refused to go, but on he forced himself to march. His hair stood on end as he reached the sighing cedars, for he heard the noises—there was no question about them. On he forced himself to go. Suddenly a white object appeared at the corner of the building. Buck turned and flew. As he went down the hill his conscience rose up, and a fierce struggle followed between the flesh and the spirit.

After a while he stopped, arguing with himself.

Back he went, by the cedar trees. The noises began. He marched on, his teeth clenched. He thought he saw a white object. His whole frame trembled, but on he marched.

“There it is!”

His flesh crept, but on he marched. The white object receded; he followed. Suddenly a great commotion began. He saw white objects moving within the basement door. On he marched, up to the door itself, and stood in the entrance. Turmoil and confusion reigned. Suddenly a white object dashed straight for him. He braced himself and did not budge. He received a heavy blow in the chest, and went over backward, and, throwing out his hands, felt the curved horns of a ram as it passed over him. Oh, how sweet it was to be butted over by that ram!! Buck could hardly catch his breath from the blow, but he had never experienced such ecstatic delight as he did then, reaching up to grab at each sheep ghost as it passed over him. Oh, how joyous it was to be trampled upon by that flock of sheep!!

The next night Buck located the gymnasium ghost in the branches of the mulberry tree that overlapped and scratched on the tin roof. He went about locating all the other ghosts, and soon became famous as a “ghost

catcher." People began to send for him from all around to come and catch their ghosts, and he had great sport at it. One day a darky came in and begged him to come out to Whitehall.

"Dey is terrible ghosts, sah—dey sho' is. This time of the year they have great carryin's on. I can't work my tater crop. I hears 'em in the daytime."

Buck told the darky he would like to catch his ghosts for him, but that it was too far—seven miles away.

The following week, the Superintendent sent for Buck. Upon entering his office, Buck found the same darky.

"Mr. Jones, this darky says his crop is overgrown with grass, that the crop of his neighbor has been abandoned, because of the ghosts in Whitehall, and he has come to ask me to let our ghost catcher come out and catch them. Would you mind going out with him?"

"No, sir, I should enjoy it."

"You will be excused from drill this afternoon, and can start when your third period recitation is over—and you will be excused if not back by taps."

"Ay, ay, sir." Buck saluted.

He and the Superintendent looked at each other and smiled. The darky, however, was in deadly earnest. After recitation, Buck put on his tramping clothes—a blue flannel shirt, a pair of old trousers and leggings, and he and the darky started out about three o'clock.

It is eight miles to Whitehall by the road, but the darky knew short cuts that saved nearly two miles. As he followed the darky, in one of the short cuts up the bank of Mill Creek, he noticed a good-sized steam vessel, that looked a cross between a steam yacht and a tug, moored under the cover of overhanging boughs.

"A queer-looking vessel," he remarked. "That looks like the niche for a gun mount on the bow. I don't see

how it could get up the creek. The chart doesn't show any channel deep enough."

"It comes in eve'y spring and stays till fall. I 'spec' de owners wants to git it away frum bein' bothered with. Dey ain't no one ever comes tru dere."

They reached the darky's house, about a quarter of a mile from Whitehall, about five o'clock, and Buck sat down to have some kindly fun about the ghosts. The darky's wife and children were all in a fearful state of mind.

"I'se gwine away from here, ef you pester them ghosts. I seed one of 'em at de winder ten minutes ago."

Buck was greatly amused. After a little rest, he started leisurely for the quaint, old colonial house. He had ridden by on horseback, several times before, but had always been in a hurry, and was now delighted to have a chance to see the house at leisure. Whitehall, in many ways, is one of the most remarkable houses in America. It was built by Governor Sharp, one of the greatest colonial governors ever sent to Maryland by the British crown. Here the function of government was carried on for many years. The guardhouse remains, where the soldiers were quartered, and the old dungeon under the house, where prisoners were confined. To this day it is a beautiful piece of pure colonial architecture, with wings running out from the main building. One is in doubt which side is the more interesting—the rear, facing the overgrown garden to the north, or the front, facing the bay to the south. Buck was coming up, admiring the beauty of the rear, when he noticed something pass by the window. He diverged his course out to the guardhouse, and then approached from the west wing. As he came close he heard noises.

"These are no sheep."

He cautiously entered the old archway leading toward the dungeon, and slowly felt his way along the walls, through the dimming light, toward the direction of the sound.

"The ghosts are men, this time."

He could now hear their voices—coarse and brutal, using foul oaths. They were evidently gambling.

Buck advanced cautiously. He got down on his all fours, as a precaution, for it had become pitch dark. Soon he came to a turn, and saw the flicker of a light against the wall at the end of the passage. Upon reaching this point, he peered around the corner, and there in the dungeon chamber sat six hideous-looking men, playing cards.

"Who can they be?" Buck asked himself.

The dim light showed a most remarkable collection of objects.

It was evidently booty, and the men, robbers. The lamp came from an engine room. The loot came off of vessels. It was the lair of the Oyster Pirates!

Buck became more deliberate. He was just drawing his legs under him to turn away before being detected, when the man dealing the cards remarked:

"There's a ghost catcher abroad. The town was full of accounts of his catches, when I went in for fresh provisions last week."

"Who is he?" asked the one opposite.

"Only one of those damn little brass buttons."

"I'd like to get a whack at those brass buttons, big ones or little ones," said another.

"Cap'n, you are always out for a fight, and I'm with you; but a war vessel is not a revenue cutter."

The captain broke out in a loud laugh.

"War vessel! They sent out that Academy tub. If the *Captain Kidd* hadn't been in the summer quarters up the creek, I'd have sent that tub and the brass buttons to Davie Jones's locker in fifteen minutes. I'll sink her upon sight by ——!"

Buck was riveted by what he heard, but gradually he was turning, when his heart seemed to stop beating, as he heard one of the players remark:

"As I passed by the cabin this morning, and asked the old woman where her old man was, she said he had gone to town for the ghost catcher."

A general laugh followed, but a terrible oath broke out from one of them.

"Why didn't you say so before," he said, as he got up from the game. "Pedro, if you look at my hand while I'm gone, I'll cut your infernal lights out."

"Where you going?"

"To take a look. I saw a young boy at the cabin as I went up to make the ghost signal."

"If it's the ghost catcher, bring him down and we'll get a tenderloin off of him for supper."

"But don't let him see you," continued the captain. "If he does, he must never go back alive."

"I should have left sooner," thought Buck to himself. "It's too late now. I'll hide." He slipped over to the other side, where the flicker of the light had no effect, and crouched down low in the dark.

The cutthroat came nearer. Buck held his breath. He passed so close that his legs fanned the air in Buck's face. He went out to the entrance, poked his head out, looked cautiously around, then started back. Buck could detect his form against the diffused light let in by the entrance at the other end. He was coming down the middle of the passage, where he would pass close again;

but, without any reason, just before he reached Buck, he edged over to the boy's side. Buck tried to dodge to the other side, but too late; the man tripped on his legs.

"What is this?" he exclaimed, with an oath, as he reached down to seize the object, whatever it might be.

CHAPTER XXIV

BUCK FIGHTS UNDER WATER—AND FIRE

BUCK did not lose an instant. He grabbed the man's legs, threw him with tremendous force, then dashed for the entrance. There was great commotion behind, but he never looked around. As he passed out of the entrance, a pistol shot rang out, and he felt the mortar dust fly against his neck. It showed the remarkable confidence and intimacy Buck had come to have with the sea that, like a flash, instead of dashing across the fields, he turned for safety to the water. It was about a quarter of a mile away. He had covered about a hundred yards, when a buzz passed by his ear, a pistol shot rang out, then another, and he felt his trousers flap along the side of his thigh; then another buzz, then another shot, as his flannel shirt lifted on his shoulder, and another as his cap flew off in front. The shots ceased. He glanced over his shoulder. The pirate captain was in hot pursuit, only about fifty yards behind, while the others, strung out farther, had their pistols in hand, waiting for a chance to fire by the captain. Buck gave a spurt at his highest speed, but barely held his own. He realized that the pirate must be a powerful athlete. He dashed into the shoal water, lifting his feet high, but his speed fell almost to a walk, and the pirate could not have been twenty paces away when he reached the water's edge.

"If he had a shot left he'd get me now," thought

Buck, as he lunged forward, with a feeling of relief as the water deepened. Looking over his shoulder, he saw the pirate stripping. At that Buck stopped and quickly stripped to his skin, losing time, however, in releasing his leggings; and when he started up the pirate was not fifteen yards away, plunging ahead through the knee-deep water, with a long knife in his hand. Buck drew into the deeper water first, which slackened his progress and shortened the distance between them. When the water was about his waist, he began to swim, giving a good kick on the bottom every other stroke. The pirate did likewise. Soon Buck's foot failed to hit bottom, and he struck out with his strongest overhand stroke. He looked around to see what stroke the pirate had. To his horror he saw the pirate, with his knife in his teeth, plowing ahead with Casey's great stroke, gaining every minute. Closer and closer he came.

Without warning, Buck dived, and when well under water, turned his course sharp to the right. A long dive; and when he came up the pirate had passed on, and he had gained at least fifteen yards. The pirate turned quickly and started toward him with increased speed. When about ten yards away, Buck dived again, and this time went under water to the left, and gained about fifteen yards as before. He felt a little relieved; but suddenly the water splashed about a foot from his face. He knew it was a bullet before he heard the crack of a rifle, which followed.

"They fight foul," he muttered. "The curs!"

The pirate started the pursuit again. Soon there was another shot; this time the bullet passed just over his head, a wonderful shot.

Buck now swam so as to bring his pursuer between himself and the riflemen, and the bullets stopped; but

the knife came closer and closer. Buck looked over his shoulder. It was a hideous sight—the bearded face, drawn into contortions, with the long knife between the canine teeth. He waited till there were scarcely ten yards between, then he quietly dived.

This time he turned to the rear, and swam backward, watching the powerful swimmer slacken his great stroke. The water was as clear as crystal. He could see every curve in the herculean body as it drew over him, the pirate looking first to the right, then to the left.

Quietly but swiftly Buck rose, reached up with his left hand, seized the pirate's beard, and jerked down and backward with all his might. The head came under, mouth open, and the pirate strangled; but the jaw did not let go the knife. Buck grabbed for it with his right hand, but too late; the pirate got it first, and drew back for a thrust. Buck seized his wrist. He tried to wrench it away, and brought his left hand into the struggle. Buck let go the beard, and brought his left hand to reënforce his right. He felt the spasms passing through the giant's frame from the strangling, and the effort to bring up to the surface to get air.

Buck held tight and watched. Just as they reached the surface, he threw his head and shoulders out, pushed the pirate's head downward, and they went down with an impetus. Buck got a good breath himself, but the pirate's head never had reached the surface. The man tried to bring his knees up to prize Buck loose, but Buck lurched, as in gymnasium tumbling, and got across the pirate's shoulders, then slid down on his back and clinched his legs around his body under the armpits, producing a severe wrench of his wrists at the same time, the knife being now held by the four hands, above the pirate's head. Suddenly they touched bottom. The man bent his knees

and gave a great shove that sent them clear to the surface. Buck rose out of the water, head and shoulders, but just before the pirate's head came out, he lurched over, and they went down again. Buck felt the man's strength weakening. He gradually forced his hands downward and backward; the point of the knife touched his breast.

Buck's whole nature recoiled at the thought of killing his enemy. Each moment the pirate thought would be his last. Utterly surprised at the clemency of his adversary, he relaxed his hold on the knife. Buck did not try to catch it as it fell from his hand and sank, but relaxed his hold, swam away under water, then rose and struck out for the open bay. He looked back and saw the pirate come up and vomit, and then turn on his back and start, evidently exhausted, for the shore.

Buck had made probably two hundred yards before the pirates on the beach recovered from their consternation over the fate of their leader. Then a bullet splashed by his head. He looked back to estimate the distance and the chance of being hit, and saw the pirate captain wave his hand to the rifleman to stop firing. On Buck swam, heading straight for the south. It was about sundown when he saw the pirates disappear into the old building. Then he changed his course to the westward, went ashore and crossed Greenbury Neck, then swam Carr's Creek, then Little Carr's Creek. He was so badly scratched in getting across Greenbury Neck that he waded the rest of the way along the water's edge, out by the Buoy Depot, then down till opposite the *Santee's* wharf, when he struck across with a good stroke. It was about ten o'clock when he reached the wharf. Here he secured the underclothes of the sentry. They were woefully small and badly torn, but he put them on and hurried on

to the Superintendent's house. He was in the midst of his recommendations, when the Superintendent's wife came in, uttered an exclamation, and rushed out. The Superintendent smiled. Buck looked innocent; he had forgotten about his remarkable uniform, so absorbed was he in the plans he had worked out. The Superintendent approved them all.

"The *Captain Kidd* will probably get away by sun-up. We'll have to rush things on the *Standish*."

By 3:30 in the morning Buck sent up word to the Superintendent that they were all ready, and only waiting for the commanding officer. The Superintendent came down and made a rapid inspection.

"You may command, Mr. Jones, and get under way as soon as you are ready. Use your own judgment."

Buck flushed crimson with the pride he felt at the confidence thus reposed in him. The only commissioned officer sent out was the surgeon. By daylight he was out in the bay, steaming slowly up and down in front of the mouth of Mill Creek; and a crowd had gathered on the dome of the State Capitol, watching with glasses. Shortly after sun-up, Buck and the crew of the *Standish* were put on edge by seeing smoke rising back up Mill Creek, and soon the *Captain Kidd* appeared. Buck was heading to the southwest, and the *Captain Kidd* turned to the south when clear of the shoals. Buck waited till she was about two thousand yards away, then hoisted a signal for her to surrender. She appeared not to understand, and slowed down, as if to make an inquiry; but Buck saw through his glasses that they were really clearing ship for action, and he called the six-pounder's gun crew to quarters. He had selected Catell for the gun captain, Knowlton for Number Two, and all the posts were filled by his classmates, as he had requested of the Superintendent.

It would have been proper tactics to steam ahead fast and capture the vessel before her gun could be mounted; but Buck had been so stirred by the words of the captain of the pirates that he decided to give him a chance to make good his boast that he would sink the *Standish* on sight. The two vessels had drawn to within about fifteen hundred yards. The guns were trained. The crews were holding in till the order.

"Fire across her bow!" Buck ordered.

Catell fired. The enemy replied by running up the black flag and firing a shot across the *Standish's* bow. The next minute they fired almost together. The shot from the pirate crashed through the deck house of the *Standish*, and exploded just beyond, while the shot from the *Standish* passed over the mark.

"Aim low, Catell. Range, twelve hundred yards—A good shot! Train on the water line abreast the engine room."

Just as Buck finished this order, a shell struck the bulwark, and a big piece of the deck rail swept down three of his gun's crew.

"Do double duty on the gun. In no case allow the fire to slacken. That shot went in near the water line. Let them have another like it. Range, one thousand yards."

Buck was gradually drawing astern of the pirate. The pirate was unsuspecting, thinking that the oblique movement was simply to shorten the range. Buck pulled three bells; the vessel began to back.

"Hard astarboard!"

Then in a few minutes he pulled four bells, for full speed ahead.

"Hard aport!"

Before the pirate knew what was happening, the

Standish swung by, before she could be raked, and steamed into the zone where the enemy's gun could not train.

"Let him have it hard—before he can get around! Train on his stern port; range, seven hundred yards."

Fast and furious was the fire of the *Standish*, with no reply from the pirate, who began to turn with a full helm to bring his gun to bear again. Suddenly she ceased turning. Buck saw through his glasses that there was great commotion in the pilot house.

"We've shot away her steering gear," he called out. "Keep up a heavy fire! Range, five hundred yards."

The gun was served with extraordinary rapidity and precision, and shot followed shot, crashing through the pirate, passing from stern to stem. Buck saw a great blast of steam come up from her boiler hatch, and suddenly her engines stopped.

"Cease firing!" he ordered, as he steamed up slowly toward the enemy, now lying at his mercy.

"Are you ready to strike?" he called out through the megaphone.

A bullet crashed through the rim of the megaphone for reply.

"Open fire, Catell! Range, two hundred yards."

The pirate replied with the small arms. The man at the helm received a bullet in the shoulder. A bullet passed through Buck's cap. The shells from the *Standish* were riddling the pirate fore and aft. A fire broke out on board. The small-arm firing ceased.

"Cease firing! Stand by to board! Keep down below the rail!"

Buck steered up quickly, backed, as his bow approached the quarter of the pirate, and came up alongside. The crew leaped upon the deck and dashed through. As

the head man reached the bridge deck, a pistol shot rang almost in his face. Dashing behind the pilot house, he found the captain of the pirates, dying by his own hand. All the rest of the crew were already dead.

Buck towed the pirate into the harbor. Upon landing, the Superintendent directed him to form the battalion and march out to the Capitol. The legislature of Maryland, in summer session, had adjourned to the dome to witness the duel; and, by the time the battalion reached the Capitol, had passed a vote of thanks, and had voted a handsome sword to each of the cadets and the crew of the *Standish* taking part, giving the names.

CHAPTER XXV

BUCK DODGES GLORY BUT IS CAUGHT

AUGUST was a hot month that year, and the Athletic Association was surprised when, early in the month, Buck proposed to begin football work.

"Not for the brawn part, but for the head part," he said.

The fact is that Buck brought his head to bear upon every proposition. Even excitement and danger could not perturb the clear working of his mind. The secret of his ultimate success in his undertakings was his combination of good thinking with the habit of tireless, indefatigable, unrelenting hard work. He thought out the best plan, and then he never let up in working it out. Such a combination, humanly speaking, is irresistible. Appreciating that the Annapolis cadets were younger and lighter than the students in other colleges, he saw that they must win by superior team work, and by using their heads during a game.

"We are too light to keep them from scoring, but they can't keep us from scoring, either," he said.

When they elected him captain, he decided to play half back, instead of guard, so that he could direct better. He entered upon a line of correspondence that ended by arranging a game not only with Princeton and the University of Pennsylvania, but with Harvard and Yale, and finally with West Point. This last electrified

both the Army and the Navy. Letters of congratulation and encouragement came pouring in from ships in all parts of the world. Because of December graduation, all the games were arranged to be played at Annapolis, the game with West Point to be the last. Buck got in over a month of team work and practice in "head work" before the hard physical work began.

The first "big" game was with the University of Pennsylvania; Annapolis won, 11 to 6.

"I can't account for it," said Penn's captain. "We never thought it possible. We are nearly twenty pounds heavier, and can eat them up. It is true," he added, reflectively, "they did a lot of head work, and played together. They played a mighty clean game."

The next big game was with Harvard; Annapolis beat, 6 to 4. This was the telegram to Cambridge:

"Team work, brilliant plays, and good luck beat us. They couldn't do it again in a hundred years. They are clean. Must have return game."

Princeton was next. Annapolis beat, 12 to 10—two touchdowns each, but Princeton missed one goal.

"They were so little they slipped between our legs."

"Those two flukes we made were fatal."

"It was luck."

Such were the theories of the Princeton men.

"I don't understand it. I'd give ten years out of my life to have it over. Luck certainly followed them," said the captain.

"Luck favors the side that uses its head," remarked a Princeton professor who happened to be standing near.

The football enthusiasts of the country at first put Annapolis's victories down to flukes on the part of their opponents, and to good luck; but now they began to

search for the secret, examining the tables of weights, ages, number of years of playing, but could find no explanation. The mystery only thickened, when the score with Yale was: Annapolis 12, Yale 12.

"Team work, brilliant plays, and luck—very clean," was the laconic message sent to New Haven.

It is not surprising that the eyes of football lovers all over the world were turned to the Navy-Army game. Enthusiasts came from the Pacific Coast. The President of the United States and most of his Cabinet came; all the foreign ambassadors were there; even staid justices of the Supreme Court had been taken up in the enthusiasm. Both houses of Congress adjourned after attending to routine business, and came down on a special train. It was beyond comparison the most brilliant gathering ever seen in America.

The first half of the game, the Army made a touchdown; but as Buck saw the touchdown coming, he hurled his whole team and threw them almost over to the side line. The goal was consequently very difficult, and they missed. This did not dampen the enthusiasm, however, for the Army band struck up a triumphal march, and the Army shouters went wild. The Superintendent crossed over, with the Secretary of the Navy, to the Army side, where the President had sat during the first half, with the Secretary of War and the Superintendent of West Point.

"Mr. President, your presence on the Army side has been too much for our team. With your transfer to our side, we shall expect to win in the second half."

"Admiral, I'll appoint you an ambassador when you retire. I have always maintained that our naval officers are the best diplomats in the world."

All the group laughed, and the Navy gave three rous-

ing cheers, and the Navy band played "Hail to the Chief," as the President crossed over to the Navy side:

When the second half was called, Buck and the captain of the Army team came out arm in arm, laughing, evidently already the best of friends, and the teams were fraternizing as teams had never been seen to do before. The Superintendent left the President for a moment, and came down to speak to Buck:

"What are the chances, Mr. Jones?"

"I'm afraid the chances are against us, sir. They are using their heads. They try but one simple play, using their greater weight to make their distance, without running any risk of our getting the ball."

"But I have promised the President that we would win when he came over to our side."

Buck smiled.

The Navy kicked off, and downed the Army at its twenty-yard line.

"Never lose a point, and fight every inch," Buck called out.

"Don't let the Navy get the ball," called out the Army captain.

For sixty yards the Army advanced the ball yard by yard, with a simple, massed play. Suddenly, Buck leaped into the place of the guard and stopped a third down, with still a yard to gain.

"The Navy's ball!"

There was a series of quick, dashing plays, in which the Navy carried the ball back forty yards; but "Mac," the Army's famous sprinter, stopped each breakaway, and the ball then passed back to the Army on a third down. The Army again took up its tortoise strategy; yard by yard they worked down the field.

"It's not exciting," said the Superintendent to the

President, "but our captain told me that was West Point's winning strategy. They get advantage of their heavier weight, and shut out our chances for brilliant plays."

"It's a case of Greek meeting Greek, Admiral," replied the President, with keen relish.

West Point was still ten yards from the Annapolis goal line, and but ten minutes remained to play.

"One more touchdown!" called the Army's captain, and they began to play faster.

Five yards more, and five minutes remained.

"Over with it—over with it!" said the Army captain impetuously.

"Steady, steady," said Buck to his men, as he came up on the line. "The President is watching you. Not an inch!"

Twice the Army fell, as if it had struck a stone wall.

"The Navy's ball! Three minutes to play!"

"Steady, steady," said Buck, as he dropped back, as though to kick.

Instead he hurdled the line at the center, shook off two men, hurdled a third, dodged a fourth, outran a fifth that tried to head him off. A sixth was pressing him close; he lost time in dodging the full back, about the middle of the field, and his pursuer gained.

"That Army man is the swiftest man in America," said some one near the President.

The President stood up on his chair. The two men passed near. Buck soon realized that his pursuer was faster. It was "Mac." He watched him over his shoulder. When he reached out with his hands, Buck skinned his back in and swerved a little and passed clear; again he reached for him; again Buck slipped clear. The speed of the two was terrific. A dead silence reigned over the thousands. They held their breath.

"Mac will get him. Don't you worry," said the Superintendent of West Point to the Secretary of War.

"I doubt it."

"He's never missed a man yet."

Again he raked, and again. His fingers would scrape Buck's back, but not get a hold.

"Drive him over the side line!"

"Over the side line!"

"Over the side line!" came the shout from the Army side, as the distance shortened and Mac still had no hold. Mac acted on the advice. He stopped raking, made a burst of speed up to abreast Buck. Buck had to ease off. He pressed him; Buck eased off farther. He knew the side line was but a few yards off, but he dared not take his eye off of his pursuer. Right up to within a foot of the side line he came, then lowered his head and refused to go farther. Mac pushed, but was afraid to try to tackle; Buck pushed—for twenty yards the two runners ran and pushed. Buck ducked his head very low. Mac stooped also. A wonderful sight it was—both men using the utmost of brawn, and yet struggling hardest with their brains.

"Try him! Try him! Throw your weight at him!"

Mac saw the last five-yard line approaching. As they crossed, he made his tackle. Buck expected it, knew he could not dodge it, stooped low and threw his entire weight the other way. Mac's arms circled his shoulders; Buck carried him on. They slipped to his waist; still Buck held his feet and dragged on. They slipped to his feet; Buck fell, holding the ball out at arm's length, and placed it on the ground, one foot over the goal line, just inside the side line. A run of one hundred and seven yards! A mighty shout went up. One half minute to play! Like

a flash Buck was on his feet. He did not wait for the others, aimed, allowing for the wind in the oblique kick.

He was breathing through his nose, and seemed as calm and deliberate as if practicing; but not a second was wasted.

"It is impossible," said the President.

He kicked. The ball rose, tumbling end over end.

"It will go to the right," thought the umpire, who had gotten in position, panting. "No—the wind is bringing it in."

Straight between the goal posts it fell, and just after it bounced the whistle blew.

Pandemonium was let loose. The President whirled his hat in the air. The Cabinet shouted. Dignified officers and professors became boys again. The Army joined in. Both bands began to play. A column formed—the Army and Navy together. Around and around the field they surged, singing national hymns.

The moment Buck kicked the goal he went for his sweater, put it on, and slipped through the end crowd.

"Where's Jones? Where's Jones?" demanded a horde of cadets, coming down.

"There he goes, out there!"

They put out in pursuit. They ran Buck to the sea wall. There happened to be a rowboat there, whose owner had gone ashore in his enthusiasm. Buck jumped in and shoved off just as the eager pursuers were about to catch him. He pulled out, laughing and bantering them.

"If you get me you've got to catch me!"

The cadets were not to be outdone. They rushed out to Burgesses's and jumped into his rowboats and started in pursuit.

As soon as the President regained his composure, he asked for Buck.

"Tell Mr. Jones to come here at once. The President wants him," directed the Superintendent.

The orderly soon came back.

"Mr. Jones has taken to the water, sir. They are trying to catch him now. There they are!"

The President roared as he saw the race out on the bay. Soon everybody saw it.

"On to the cutters!"

Officers and cadets alike surged down to the boat-house. The cutters were all there ready from the recent drill. They piled in. Old officers pulled oars alongside of plebes. Army cadets and officers went along. The President and members of his Cabinet went with the Superintendent to his rear piazza, where they watched the pursuit. The crowd remained to watch it from the grounds. Buck couldn't understand it, as he saw a regular flotilla shoving off. On he pulled. He held his own with the rowboats; but the first cutter to get off began to gain on him, though he had three quarters of a mile the start. The cutter passed one row-boat after another. About abreast the lighthouse, she came in speaking distance of Buck.

"Have you struck, sir?"

"No, sir; I have just begun to fight, sir."

All laughed, and Buck pulled on.

"We demand an unconditional surrender," said the coxswain of the cutter, as his bow drew up to the stern of the rowboat.

"Not while there's a man left on board."

"Stand by to board!"

At this point, the President, looking through his glasses, caught the Superintendent's arm.

"They have overtaken him—they are boarding! By jingo! He's gone overboard! The others have gone over-

board after him! He's diving—the boat heads him off! They've got him! Admiral, this makes me a boy again. It'll add another year to my life!"

There never was such a triumphal march as that return to the Academy. It gave a vent to the boundless enthusiasm of the victory, and the great love and respect all had for Buck.

"A model game it was—plucky game, brain and brawn put to the limit, but clean as ivory—immaculate," said the referee, with enthusiasm.

The Superintendent suspended the regulations till church formation next morning. A great ball was given to the Army that night. The Academy had never seen such a celebration since its foundation. The President's enthusiasm was so great that he canceled an important engagement and remained over and delivered the diplomas to Buck's class.

We unconsciously come to love a place in proportion to our character growth while there. The course at the Naval Academy is necessarily a hard grind, and Buck, like his classmates, for two months in advance, had been counting the days till graduation; but now that the time was at hand, the thought of leaving stirred the depths of his heart, and he looked out over the familiar scenes with a new tenderness; over the buildings and monuments, the lawns, the trees, the walks, and the shimmering waters of the bay and river. Everything seemed to smile and say "Good-by. God speed you in your career," and he realized that he loved every spot, every stone in the place.

Catell and Knowlton were waiting for Buck to come with the mail, which they expected to bring their orders, before starting for the train.

"I can't get over the funny way we caught him after the game," said Knowlton with a laugh.

"You might have known," said Catell, "that he would end it up on the water. He's in league with the sea."

Buck came running up.

"Our requests have been granted. We all three go to the *Oregon*, and what is more, Preble has gotten a commission in the Marine Corps, and is to go to the *Oregon* with us."

This made Buck's happiness complete, and as the train pulled out he realized, with exultation, that he was off for stirring scenes under the flag, in the service of his country; but nevertheless a lump came in his throat as he looked out of the window for the last glimpses, just as he had looked out, as a candidate, for the first glimpses; and as the clock tower disappeared, he said half to himself, half to Catell:

"The *dear* old Naval Academy!"

(1)

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